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New York

President: Mr. Gasana (Rwanda)

Members:

Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
Australia	Ms. King
Chad	Mr. Cherif
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
France	Mr. Araud
Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
Luxembourg	Mr. Asselborn
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and other representatives present here today. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Viet Nam, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

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

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Ramallah, and to give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for giving me the honour of briefing the Council from

Ramallah. I deeply apologize for being late, which was due to my continuing engagement in Israel. I have only just arrived. As you know, I am now well into my third day of an ongoing mission throughout the region. I want to thank the Security Council for its strong support for my efforts.

Ramallah is my fifth stop on a journey that has so far included Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt and Israel. I will continue on to Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other countries of the region, if necessary. I have had intensive and fruitful discussions with the leadership in all countries. I also had a very meaningful meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Qatar and with United States Secretary of State John Kerry, as well as the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil El-Arabi, in Cairo late last night. I have also had the opportunity to meet the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, who was visiting the region, and to have a telephone conversation with President Hollande of France. We exchanged our views and discussed the current situation in the region. I am very grateful to the many countries that have been engaging in the diplomatic efforts to bring an end to this crisis.

I am sure that members of the Council will understand that at this highly sensitive moment, I cannot be expected to publicly reveal the details. Suffice it to say that it is my hope and belief that these talks will lead to results and an end to the fighting in the very near future. Of course, there are many obstacles and complexities. This is a mission of solidarity and peace. But just as I landed in the region, I was greeted with the news of the terrible fighting in Shejaiya, reflecting the enormous human toll of the fighting and the scale of the challenges before us. I have carried a three-part message at every turn of my visit: first, stop the fighting; secondly, start the dialogue; and thirdly, tackle the root causes.

A ceasefire is essential, but without addressing the deeper issues we will never solve the problem; we will merely delay it for yet another time. The cycle will continue, except the bitterness and hatred will become that much more entrenched each time it comes around. Quite simply, if a people are left with despair and occupation, the problem will not disappear; it will only grow.

The most promising prospect of a ceasefire comes in the form of the initiative put forward by Egypt on the basis of the November 2012 understanding on a ceasefire. This effort has garnered the support of President Abbas

and the Arab League. Unfortunately, Hamas has yet to respond positively. I encourage all those with influence to urge constructive action. This is the most meaningful path to peace. I have also discussed Israel's legitimate security concerns with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ya'alon, and I am going to continue my meetings with President Peres and other ministers.

I once again strongly condemn the indiscriminate rocket fire launched by Hamas and Islamic Jihad from Gaza into Israel. I am also alarmed by Israel's heavy response and the corresponding high civilian death toll. Since the Council was briefed on Sunday, the violence has reached even more alarming levels. Yet again, too many civilians, including many children, are paying the price for this latest escalation. I once again urge all parties to rally behind a collective international effort to end the fighting. There is no time to lose.

Immediately following this briefing, I will get the latest update from our United Nations team in Gaza. I want to stress how deeply proud I am of our many United Nations colleagues, with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the lead, courageously assisting the people of Gaza in such difficult circumstances. They are providing crucial relief and shelter to civilians in imminent danger. The escalation of violence is now acutely affecting UNRWA's regular operations. Some 23 UNRWA installations are closed as a result of the conflict. A total of 77 UNRWA installations have been damaged since 1 June as a result of the conflict. The premises have been used to store weapons. This is unacceptable. Today, about 110,000 people — more than 5 per cent of the population of Gaza — are seeking shelter with UNRWA.

In the past, our premises in southern Lebanon and Gaza have been hit with serious loss of life. I call on Israel to exercise particular care to avoid another unfortunate incident. I urge all present to respond to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal for \$115 million to address the most pressing humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. We must do all we can to alleviate their suffering. I thank the many countries that have already generous humanitarian assistance to the flash appeal for UNRWA, including \$47 million announced by United States Secretary of State John Kerry. I also thank United Nations staff, including my Special Coordinator on the ground, Mr. Robert Serry, for their relentless efforts to negotiate much-needed spaces to respond to humanitarian needs.

The international community, including the Council, as recently as Sunday evening has issued numerous calls for an end to violence and for the protection of civilians. We as the international community have to assume responsibility for what is the result of a collective failure to advance a political solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We cannot return to the status quo ante — a concern that Palestinians and Israelis both share.

Core elements of resolution 1860 (2009) remain unimplemented. They include an end to weapons smuggling, the full opening of the crossings and bringing Gaza back under one legitimate Palestinian Government that accepts and adheres to the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Sustainable peace and security will be achieved only through a negotiated political settlement. Only durable progress, including on socioeconomic and governance issues, can permanently stabilize Gaza.

It is imperative to address the issue of governance. Tens of thousands of employees hired after 2007 and working in Gaza are not being paid, while more than 60,000 employees continue to receive salaries from Ramallah without performing essential Government functions in Gaza.

The United Nations remains prepared to help coordinate and consult with all concerned parties.

This is the third time as Secretary-General that I have had to come on an emergency mission to the region to help end a crisis. That means that the children of Gaza are now living through the third major assault in the past five years of their young lives. The horror and upheaval is beyond imagination. The cycle of suffering must end. The parties must seize the opportunity not only to renew a ceasefire, but also to support a durable political, security, institutional and socioeconomic progress that stabilizes Gaza. The parties must also heed the Council's call to return to negotiations in order to find an end to this conflict through a viable two-State solution.

As I have repeatedly emphasized on my mission, Israelis, but also Palestinians, need to feel a sense of security. Palestinians, but also Israelis, need to see a horizon of hope. Both sides need to be reassured that international humanitarian law counts and that there will be justice for all. Let us do our part for all the peoples of this region.

Lastly, I hope the Council will understand that I have a series of important meetings in Ramallah. Therefore, I will be able to remain at this meeting until 6.50 p.m. here. I will be very happy to listen as much as I can. I count on your continued support and leadership, Sir.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I thank you, Mr. President, for your skilled stewardship of the Security Council this month and for the efforts to address the crisis being faced by the Palestinian people, particularly due to the Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing and convey our deep gratitude to him for undertaking an emergency mission to the region in support of the regional and international efforts to secure an urgent ceasefire based on the Egyptian initiative and with the active engagement of President Mahmoud Abbas and other concerned parties. I also welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg Asselborn, who is with us today to attend this very important meeting.

Today, we also recognize the efforts on the ground of United Nations Special Coordinator Robert Serry, including with regard to the calls for a humanitarian pause, as well as the valiant efforts of United Nations agencies on the ground, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), under the leadership of Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, as well as other United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, that are providing vital emergency assistance to the Palestinian people at this time of crisis.

Regrettably, in spite of all of those regional and international efforts, hundreds more Palestinian civilians have been killed, thousands have been injured and tens of thousands have been displaced by the Israeli military aggression in Gaza since we last appeared before the Security Council last Friday (see S/PV.7220).

Israeli bombardment — including missile airstrikes, bombs and artillery shelling by air, land and sea in

densely populated civilian areas — has also resulted in the destruction of more than 1,000 homes and damage to more than 18,000 others. Fear and panic have gripped the population, leading to the displacement of more than 100,000 people, who are now sheltering in UNRWA schools, already double the number of Palestinians who sought refuge in the Agency's schools in the Israeli war on Gaza of 2008 to 2009. We urgently appeal for efforts to address the immense humanitarian needs of the Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including through donor support to UNRWA emergency appeals.

With no regard for human life, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to slaughter entire families. A family of 26 people in Khan Younis, the Al-Jami family; a family of 8 people in northern Gaza, the Abu Jarad family; a family of 10 people in Shujaiya, the Ayyad family; a family of 7 people in Shujaiya, the Al-Hallaq family; a family of 6 people in Shujaiya, the Al-Sakafi family; a family of 5 people, also in Shujaiya, the Sleem family; a family of 4 people in Shujaiya, the Al-Hayyeh family; and a family of 4 people in northern Gaza, the Al-Zuweidi family, were among the many victims of Israel's heinous attacks in just the past three days, with children and women constituting the majority of the dead.

The casualties are mounting with every passing minute. In one day alone, Sunday, 20 July, 95 Palestinians were brutally killed, with at least 72 people, including 17 children, 14 women and 4 elderly persons, massacred in Shujaiya by the occupying forces, who left the streets of the area littered with bodies and with many victims trapped under the rubble of homes, thereby ensuring a rising death toll. Overwhelmed paramedics there declared, "There are no injured in Shujaiya, only dead."

It is nearly impossible to keep up with the pace of killing and injury caused by the occupying Power with all means of heavy weaponry against a defenceless civilian population. For instance, in a period of just two hours following my letter to the Security Council yesterday, another 23 Palestinians were killed, their names and stories not yet included in the vast documentation of the Israeli war crimes against the Palestinian people, which we will continue to insist be officially recorded by the United Nations in our tireless pursuit of justice for the victims and our nation.

The death toll now stands at more than 600 Palestinians killed and more than 3,500 people injured. We are haunted by the images of babies, boys, girls,

women and men murdered by the Israeli occupying forces in their homes, in the streets and in refugee camps; by the images of the thousands of wounded people, their lives forever marred; and by the sight of thousands of Palestinian families again dispossessed and fleeing for safety from the Israeli assaults in this endless Nakba against our people.

Let me just show Council members some of the pictures of the victims. These are from Shujaiya. These are the human faces of our victims and these are samples of those who suffer the most and who are killed in the greatest numbers — the children. We are not numbers. We are human beings.

When hospital floors are drowning in the blood of innocents, corridors are filled with the deafening screams of pain of the wounded and the cries of grief and anguish for loved ones killed, and doctors, with barely any supplies and deprived of sleep and sustenance struggle courageously to save human lives, despite themselves being targeted for attack by the Israeli war machine, we know that the international community has failed — failed in its commitment to protect civilians in armed conflict, failed to enforce the rule of law and failed to uphold its promise to humankind.

I am therefore again compelled to at least read the names of our many innocent children killed by the Israeli occupying forces in the past days and to honour their memories. We are wearing black ribbons today to honour all of our children, women, men and all Palestinians civilians killed in the genocide by Israel against our people in the Gaza Strip. Tawfiq Ahmad Abu Jami, age 5; Haifa Tawfiq Ahmad Abu Jami, age 9; Shahinaz Walid Muhammad Abu Jami, age 1; Rayan Tayseer Abu Jami, age 8; Rozan Abu Jami, age 14; Ahmad Ayman Mahrous Siyam, age 17; Mustafa Nabil Mahrous Siyam, age 12; Ghayda Nabil Mahrous Siyam, age 8; Dalal Nabil Mahrous Siyam, 8 months; Mayar Nayif Al-Yaziji, age 2; Anas Al-Yaziji, age 5; Ibrahim Ammar, age 13; Assem Ammar, age 4; Iman Ammar, age 9; Saji Hasan Al-Hallaq, age 4; Kinan Al-Hallaq, age 6; Mohammed Al-Hallaq, age 2; Shadi Isleem, age 15; Alaa Isleem, age 11; Fadi Isleem, age 10; Samia Al-Sheikh Khalil, age 3; Hiba Khalil, age 13; Khalil Al-Hayyeh, age 7; Umama Al-Hayyeh, age 9; Dima Isleem, age 2; Mohamad Ayyad, age 2; Rahaf Abu Jumaa, age 4; Tala Al-Attawi, age 7; Dina Hamada, age 15; Omar Hamouda, age 10; Ghada Ayyad, age 9; Marah Al-Jammal, age 11; Marwa Al-Sirsawi, age 3; Ahmad Ismail Abu Musallam, age 10; Wala Abu

Musallam, age 12; Muhammad Abu Musallam, age 15; Rahaf Khalil Al-Jbour, age 4; Yassin Al-Humaidi, age 4; Mohammad Shadi Natiz, age 15; Mohammed Salim Natiz, age 4; Siham Mousa Abu Jarad, age 15; Ahlam Na'im Abu Jarad, age 13; Haniyeh Abdelrahman Abu Jarad, age 3; Samih Na'im Abu Jarad, 12 months old.

While Council members may be fatigued by our repeated lists, we must bear witness to the despair of our people and insist on their dignity. Those Palestinian children, whose lives have been so cruelly taken by the occupying Power, are not just figures; they had names, dreams and mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents and friends, who are grieving their deaths and devastated by the massive loss of human life for which there can be no justification and no consolation. On behalf of the Palestinian people, we ask: What is the international community doing to stop the bloodletting, to stop Israel's atrocities? What is the Security Council doing to uphold its commitment to protect civilians in armed conflict and uphold the law and the Charter?

Without decisive action, the Council's resolutions and statements ring hollow as defenceless civilians find no relief from the murderous Israeli war machine. In Shujaiya and all of Gaza City, in Khan Younis, Beit Hanoun, Jabaliya, Nuseirat, Beit Lahiya, Bureij, Rafah, Deir Al-Balah and everywhere in Gaza, the Palestinian people are suffering gravely. The ability to cope with the humanitarian fallout is on the brink of collapse under the impact of the Israeli aggression and eight-year blockade. As the obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of the civilians under its occupation is gravely breached by Israel, we reiterate our appeal to the Security Council to uphold its duty to maintain international peace and security, without conditions, without exceptions and without delay. Even as efforts in the region to secure a ceasefire continue, the Security Council still has a responsibility to act to stop the slaughter of innocent men, women and children.

Israeli impunity must be halted and the pretexts for its crimes rejected. The world can no longer deny that such crimes are being deliberately planned and carried out to exact maximum loss and punishment against an occupied people, whether via military attacks and reprisals, colonization of the land, imprisonment of thousands, blockade or humiliation of the people and leadership. That is a fact verified by the many declarations by Israel's Prime Minister and other Government officials and by settler leaders and terror gangs, regarding the price they will make the

Palestinians pay for daring to demand their rights, and it is a fact repeatedly proven by the violent, racist and illegal actions of the occupying Power.

Moreover, we reject the cynical Israeli arguments labelling an entire people as terrorists. Our children, women and men are not terrorists and no family would allow their loved ones to be used as human shields. The reality is that they have been held captive by Israel in an open prison called Gaza, which remains under Israeli occupation and control, regardless of the false Israeli narrative regarding the 2005 redeployment.

We have never once heard the Israeli representative mention before the Council the word “occupation”, conveniently ignoring the fact that Israel is an occupier yet somehow claiming the right to defend itself from the people it is viciously occupying and repressing — an Israeli-fabricated right certainly not ordained under international law, as opposed to the legitimate right to resist foreign occupation and the right to self-determination.

We reiterate that it is no coincidence that this latest aggression was launched amid increased international pressure on Israel in the peace process; international acceptance of the Palestinian unity Government; the intensifying world condemnation of the settlements; settler terror; provocations in East Jerusalem; the Gaza blockade; the crisis of Palestinian prisoners and detainees; Israel’s destruction of the two-State solution; and the growing global calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

The Council must live up to the demands of the Charter, as well as to the expectations of the international community, where the injustices being endured by the Palestinian people under this depraved Israeli occupation have again rallied millions of people — of every race, colour and creed — in the streets of capitals all over the world demanding an end to the Israeli aggression, colonization and collective punishment in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and demanding accountability for Israeli war crimes, including at the International Criminal Court.

The Council must play its rightful role and contribute to the urgent efforts to secure a ceasefire. Moreover, it must exert efforts to ensure that the ceasefire is sustainable, preventing the recurrence of such crises and addressing the core issues, including the need to end the Israeli blockade of Gaza and ensure

the sustained movement of persons and goods, the need to ensure protection for the Palestinian people, and the need for a political horizon forward.

Despite all the odds and the immeasurable loss and grief, the Palestinian people hold firm to their conviction in the United Nations and to the promises and commitment to bring an end to their oppression and achieve justice. We reaffirm that we continue to strive for a peaceful political solution to this conflict, to which there is no military solution. We appeal once again to the international community to lend all support possible to the long-running efforts to achieve a just, lasting and peaceful settlement and the long-overdue realization by the Palestinian people of their rights and national aspirations, including to freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, I reiterate my call for the adoption of a resolution by the Security Council condemning this Israeli aggression against the State of Palestine so as to stop this aggression immediately, lift the blockade against the Gaza Strip, and to provide the Palestinian people with international protection.

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

Mr. Roet (Israel): Before I begin, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his efforts in the region, and to also thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this debate.

Two centuries ago, the great German writer and statesman Goethe said: “The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes”.

Look around the world today and you will see that the primary threat to global peace and security is staring the Council right in the face. From Buenos Aires to Brussels and from Benghazi to Boston, no nation is immune to the threat of radical Islamist terrorism.

Armed with dangerous ideologies and deadly weapons, violent radicals are waging a war to destroy lives and destroy our way of life. We have, unfortunately, become all too familiar with their names — ISIS, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Hizbullah and Hamas.

These violent factions share a disdain for democracies, contempt for modernity and a willingness to target innocent civilians. It is no accident that most of these extremist groups operate in the Middle East, a

region plagued by instability and intolerance, dictators and disorder, tyranny and terrorism.

Within the region, one nation stands apart. The State of Israel is the only liberal democracy between the Red Sea and the Caspian Sea. We are on the front line, fighting radical Islamist terrorism. The struggle that we face today is a preview of the struggle that the rest of the civilized world will likely face tomorrow.

Even as we speak, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are fighting to rid Gaza of the Hamas military infrastructure, which has terrorized the Israeli people and devastated the Palestinian people for well over a decade. Trust me when I say that Gaza is the very last place we want our soldiers to be — the very last place.

This is not a war we chose. It was our last resort.

Hamas has sent suicide bombers into our cafes and onto our buses. It has sent armed terrorists through tunnels into our homes and schools, and it has launched over 12,000 missiles and rockets towards our towns and cities in the last 10 years.

Israel is a small country, and every single person has been affected by terrorism. Israelis may have grown up with this threat in our backyard, but we have never and will never grow used to it. We will never grow used to the sound of sirens or the roar of rockets overhead. We will never grow used to seeing our children in army uniforms, and we will never, ever — we refuse to — become accustomed to burying our sons and daughters, as too many Israelis have had to do since Hamas dragged us into this conflict.

Israel did not want this war. Three times — three different times — Israel agreed to accept a ceasefire, and every single time Hamas refused and launched even more rockets. Each of those rockets sends a message loud and clear: Hamas is determined to wage war.

Even when the United Nations and the Red Cross asked Hamas to hold its fire so they could assist its own Palestinian civilians, Hamas refused. Once again, Hamas proved that it has no regard for the well-being of the Palestinian people. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Hassan Shokry Selim, stated: “Had Hamas accepted the Egyptian proposal, it could have saved the lives of ... Palestinians”.

Let me make the picture very, very clear. Palestinian civilian casualties are a direct result of Hamas’s decision to continue to send rockets and terrorists towards Israel while putting their civilians up front to protect their

so-called leaders and their terrorists. The leaders of the Palestinian Authority and their delegations today refused to stand up and say to Hamas, “Stop!”.

In the past month alone, Israel has been attacked on four fronts. Rockets have been fired from Lebanon, from Syria, from Sinai, and Hamas has launched an all-out assault from Gaza. In addition to firing rockets, Hamas has now developed a new strategy to wage war against Israel. In Gaza, there are two cities: a city above ground, and a city below ground. Eighteen metres below the Strip are kilometres of dense terror tunnels crisscrossing like a giant web. Hamas has built a vast underground terror network, reinforced with thousands of tons of concrete and supported by massive beams.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh recently declared that the tunnels opened “a new strategy in confronting ... the enemy from underground”.

Since entering Gaza, the IDF has uncovered 23 tunnels with over 66 different entry points, many of which are under homes and schools. No site is off-limits for Hamas. One of the tunnels exposed over the weekend began under a family home and was packed with explosives. Hamas is using its extensive tunnel system to carry out a series of deadly attacks. In the past week, dozens of heavily armed terrorists have used those very tunnels to infiltrate Israel.

What do you expect Israel to do when terrorists in Shujaiya are as close to Kibbutz Nahal Oz as this Chamber is to the Metropolitan Museum of Art? Imagine what it is like for Israelis living near Gaza to know that there are dozens of hidden tunnels leading to the doorstep of their communities. Imagine what it is like to fall asleep wondering if a terrorist is tunnelling under your home or to wake up and wonder if your children will be safe on their way to school. Just yesterday, heavily armed Hamas terrorists emerged from a tunnel only 200 metres from a kindergarten.

Over the weekend, eight Palestinian terrorists emerged from a tunnel almost 300 metres inside Israel, armed with automatic weapons and wearing Israeli military uniforms. They fired a rocket-propelled grenade at Israeli military jeeps, killing two soldiers before retreating back underground. A few hours later, two more terrorists entered Israel using a tunnel. They were carrying tranquilizers and handcuffs and were on a mission to kidnap Israelis.

For years, the international community has criticized Israel for restricting the entry of construction

materials into Gaza. Now we know what those building materials are actually being used for. All this time, the international community thought that it was sending money to develop social services or political institutions or economic structures. In truth, the aid dollars that were sent were only aiding Hamas to build its terror stronghold. The fact that Hamas directs its budget underground rather than above ground proves that it is more interested in warfare than in the welfare of the Palestinian people. Hamas violates international law and brutally abuses the people of Gaza. It sends innocent men, women and children to stand on the roofs of their homes so as to shield the terrorists firing rockets from their living rooms and bedrooms below. It builds bunkers for its leaders, but refuses to build bomb shelters for civilians. It fires rockets from mosques and schools deep inside densely populated neighbourhoods. And it has set up its headquarters inside a Gaza hospital, where Hamas leaders can be seen walking through the hallways.

Rather than taking steps to avoid civilian casualties, Hamas has stepped up its attacks in the hopes of creating even more casualties. Hamas's strategy is clear. It sees every Palestinian victim of this conflict as fuel for a propaganda machine. The purpose of that machine is to push the international community into pressuring Israel to grant Hamas's demands. Sadly, many people have fallen for that cynical campaign.

All those who argue that both sides are equally to blame are playing into Hamas's hand and inviting a ruthless radical group to continue its campaign of terror. I want to remind the Council that that terror organization sits in the Palestinian unity Government. President Abbas has a choice to make. He can continue to remain silent and stand in support of Hamas. Or he can assume the mantle of leadership by dissolving the unity Government. The choice is his — to be a part of the problem or to be part of the solution.

Israel is doing its utmost to avoid harming civilians because we believe that every innocent life lost is a tragedy. We deeply regret the losses, but the blame lies with Hamas for hiding behind civilians and using them as human shields. The IDF is fully committed to upholding the rule of law and is operating only against terrorist targets. It is taking steps that no other nation at any time in history has taken. What other nation supplies millions of tons of humanitarian aid or sets up a field hospital to treat the wounded on the other side, even as its enemy fires on it indiscriminately? What

other nation sends messages to warn exactly where it will strike, giving the enemy time to set booby traps and deploy snipers?

Israel spent four days warning Palestinians in northern Gaza that the military would soon enter their neighbourhoods to uproot Hamas. That gave Hamas four days to prepare an assault on our troops. Every time we drop a leaflet or make a phone call or send a text message warning of an imminent attack, we are endangering our own children so that we may keep their children safe. As we have said before, Israel has no interest in being in Gaza. We are fighting in Gaza, but we are not fighting the people of Gaza.

The equation is simple — when it is quiet in Israel, it will be quiet in Gaza. The goal of our operation is to eliminate the rockets, shut down the terror tunnels and demilitarize Gaza in order to restore sustained quiet to the people of Israel. Members of the international community have said that Israel has the right to defend its citizens, but when we exercise that right we are criticized. What do they expect us to do when terrorists are tunnelling into our communities? What do they expect us to do when our children are being kidnapped and murdered? What do you expect us to do when rockets are fired at our cities and our citizens cannot spend a single day without running to a bomb shelter?

Iran is exerting its influence to attack Israel from the land, the sea and the air on every front. It is supplying Hamas with rockets in Gaza, it is standing by Al-Assad in Syria, and it is supplying Hizbullah with missiles in Lebanon. Some of those terrorist groups are now teaming up to form a terror dream team that is intent on making life a nightmare for millions of Israelis. Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah called Hamas leader Khaled Meshal to say:

“Hizbullah and the Lebanese resistance ... support Hamas's strategy and the just conditions it has set for an end to the conflict”.

For years, we have warned the international community that Hizbullah was amassing tens of thousands of rockets and missiles. We were met with silence. Will you continue to remain silent? For years, we have told the international community that Hamas was building a terror stronghold in Gaza, and we have called on the international community to condemn the rocket fire. We were met with silence. For years, we have warned of the impending escalation, and the international community ignored us.

Goethe was right. The hardest thing to see is what is before one's eyes. Israel is on the frontline of the global war against radical Islamist terrorism. The entire civilized world has a stake in the outcome and must therefore support Israel's right to defend its citizens. Israel's fight against terrorism today will determine how we all live tomorrow. To do nothing and to say nothing in support of our efforts is to invite tyranny and terror into our own backyards. The international community must stand together, speak together and prevail together, so that all people everywhere can live in freedom.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his live presentation from the Middle East, as well as the representative of the non-member Observer State of Palestine and the Deputy Representative of Israel for their statements. Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the statement that will be made shortly by the representative of the European Union.

The Middle East today seems farther away than ever from peace, so much so that to speak of the Middle East means to speak of the conflicts there, as if the identity of the region has become inseparable from the wars tearing it apart. At its heart lies the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has, for seven decades, reflected the impotence of the international community. For two weeks, that conflict has once again tragically reminded us of our responsibilities. As we meet, the Israeli offensive against Gaza has claimed more than 600 lives and more than 3,500 wounded, the majority of whom are civilians.

Already an open-air prison, Gaza is literally becoming a graveyard for its inhabitants. Can there be any conceivable argument to justify such blood-letting and such disproportionate use of armed force against civilians? No, there is none. Clearly, the right of Israel to defend itself and protect its people is not disputed. We condemn in the strongest terms the rocket fire showered on Israeli cities. But Israel's right does not justify the despicable suffering inflicted on the civilian population of Gaza.

More than 100,000 Palestinians are now living as displaced persons. That has plunged the Gaza Strip into an unprecedented humanitarian and public health crisis without precedent, with even more tragic consequences than operation Cast Lead in 2009. All in all, the toll on children is perhaps the most terrifying. According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 30 per cent of those killed are children. The fact that, as indicated by organizations on the ground, children die under Israeli fire than Palestinian combatants is yet a further reason for outrage. Under international humanitarian law, all parties have an absolute obligation to safeguard the lives of civilians caught up in the cross-hairs of a conflict. Of course, that obligation applies to Hamas and other armed groups that indiscriminately targeting Israeli civilians.

The absolute priority today is to immediately halt the suffering of Palestinian civilians on the ground. That requires the prompt conclusion of a humanitarian truce so as to care for the wounded, the displaced people and those trapped in the ruins. We place great hope in the mediation efforts headed by Egypt with the support of the Secretary-General and United States Secretary of State John Kerry. Those efforts will receive our full support. We also reiterate our support to UNRWA and its crucial work to lessen the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Once a humanitarian truce is agreed to, a comprehensive and lasting cessation of hostilities will need to be negotiated. There is no other solution. The violence must stop. Actions that fuel hate and discord must be stopped as well. Suffering and humiliation must be halted. The Palestinian people deserve to live in a dignified manner. The blockade draining life from Gaza for years must be lifted as an imperative. No one can live in the conditions imposed on the people in Gaza. For seven years, these people have lived besieged between three walls and the sea. They have survived solely thanks to UNRWA's aid and that of the international community. That is the only way that Israel can afford to subject 1.7 million Palestinians to those appalling conditions.

Finally, there is a need to tackle the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The stronger of the two, Israel, has to choose to accept the only possible way to live in peace, that is, the two-State solution, halting provocation and the expansion of settlements, or getting increasingly carried away in repeated military actions, which only exacerbate the conflict. As the Ambassador said, it is true: the truth and reality need to be seen as they are. We need to be forward-looking. For now, we hope that the Security Council will play its role to support efforts to put an end to the spiral of violence.

After taking up the carnage in Gaza, I now turn to the Syrian tragedy.

The conflict in Syria has claimed at least 160,000 lives and forced more than 3 million Syrians to flee their country. That reflects on the international community as a sad reminder of its limits and divisions. As for facts, the Bashar Al-Assad regime has been allowed to bomb schools and hospitals, to attack humanitarian convoys as well as medical personnel and to use starvation as a weapon of war against besieged people. The situation is most concerning for the 10.8 million Syrians, half of them children, who are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. More than 4.5 million Syrians are trapped in combat areas that are difficult for humanitarian workers to reach.

Resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted by the Security Council in February. It has changed nothing. On the ground, humanitarian access continues to worsen, given the systematic obstruction by the Syrian Government. We hoped that resolution 2165 (2014), adopted unanimously by the Security Council in the past week upon the initiative of Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg, would serve as a turning point. Pursuant to the resolution, humanitarian agencies of the United Nations are authorized to transport humanitarian aid in a cross-border manner by the most direct routes to those in need all over Syria. The consent of the Syrian Government is no longer necessary. Aid is to be distributed on the basis of needs assessments carried out by the United Nations, not by Damascus. Should resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) not be complied with, the Security Council should undertake supplementary measures, which is an essential element.

We hope that this innovative resolution will allow for a true breakthrough on the ground. Its implementation should allow for assistance to flow to between 1.4 and 2 million people in Syria who are to date still out of reach for humanitarian workers. That being the case, the implementation of Security Council resolutions will not be enough in itself to resolve the humanitarian crisis. The only lasting solution is the resolution of the Syrian conflict, which implies a political process that is Syrian-lead, along the lines of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of June 2012.

In that regard, Luxembourg welcomes the appointment of Mr. Staffan de Mistura as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. That could breathe new life into seeking a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

In conclusion, just a few words about the effect of the Syrian crisis on the countries of the region,

particularly Lebanon and Iraq. Over the past month, deadly attacks have increased in Lebanon. That is the most worrying sign of the growing impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon. The effects of the presence and influx of Syrian refugees on the political, economic and social stability of the country are also significant, which is to be expected.

Since April, the number of refugees from Syria officially registered in Lebanon crossed the threshold of 1 million people: one fourth of the Lebanese population. To grapple with those challenges, it is crucial for the Lebanese political players to elect as swiftly as possible a President to succeed Mr. Michel Suleiman. The election would bolster Lebanese institutions and help stabilize the country. The election would also facilitate the implementation of the disassociation policy in line with the Baabda Declaration.

I turn now to Iraq.

We would like to condemn in the strongest terms the systematic persecution of ethnic and religious minorities by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and by armed groups associated with it. In particular, we are deeply concerned by reports of the treatment of the Christian population in Mosul. Those individuals are subject to unacceptable threats. We therefore fully support the press statement on the persecution of minorities in Mosul, adopted yesterday by the Security Council. The unity and stability of the region are threatened by the onward march of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Thus, a swift establishment of a new Government is of crucial importance. We have no doubt that Iraqi political stakeholders will rise above their partisan interests to tackle the challenges before the country and that, in a spirit of unity, they will swiftly form a Government that reflects the will of the Iraqi people.

There is no miracle solution to resolve the numerous conflicts impacting the Middle East, but every chance we get we must do everything in our power to bring diplomacy back to centre stage. First and foremost, we must demonstrate to whom the international community's heart goes out. That is to the weakest, the victims, be they in Aleppo, Mosul or Gaza.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to welcome Mr. Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

Today, I will not describe the scenes of carnage and destruction in the Gaza Strip. Words cannot describe

the lifeless bodies of the children of Gaza, or their limbs spread across its streets of Gaza and in what is left of hospitals. Words cannot describe the feelings of the mourning mothers in Gaza, or the situation of the impoverished families or of those families who do not know if one day the future will come. The least the Security Council could do for to the people of Gaza today is to assume its moral and legal responsibilities to uphold international peace and security and to work for an immediate cessation of the unjust Israeli aggression.

Jordan refutes and condemns in the strongest terms the savage aggression against the Gaza Strip, in particular the atrocious carnage exacted by the Israeli occupying force in the area of Shujaya. Jordan condemns the disproportionate and unjustified use of excessive force, which has in no measure, small or large, to do with the right of self-defence. The events under way in Gaza represent a deliberate targeting of Palestinian civilians and a policy of collective punishment adopted by Israel against the Palestinian people.

The current Israeli actions serve to expose the deeply held belief on the part of the Israeli Government that human life has no value if the victim is a Palestinian, or even if the victim is a Palestinian civilian. Israel must realize that military force cannot bring about peace and security, nor can a policy of humiliation bring the Palestinian people to its knees.

The international community must take a look at the far-reaching human suffering and dangerous situation in Gaza. The international community should work to rapidly provide humanitarian aid to those people. Jordan has sent military personnel to the hospitals in Gaza, as well as emergency medical aid to the Gaza Strip. We also continue to receive an influx of wounded Palestinians. United Nations reports and those of emergency relief organizations speak to the emergency needs of the people of Gaza in the areas of medication and vital supplies. The international community needs to swiftly respond to the appeals of the United Nations and the humanitarian agencies on the ground, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We reiterate our call for a total ceasefire and for a halt to the targeting of civilians, wherever they may be, as well as for compliance with international law. In that framework, Jordan supports the Egyptian initiative for a ceasefire and will also support efforts made by the Secretary-General and by United States Secretary of State John Kerry.

The dangerous Israeli escalation distracts the attention of the international community from Israel's daily ongoing efforts, condemned by everyone, and from the aggression targeting East Jerusalem and holy Muslim and Christian sites, in particular the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque. We in Jordan are fighting daily against that type of aggression and unilateral measures and violations. We do so by safeguarding Hashemite authority in East Jerusalem, which is carried out by the Hashemite King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein.

Israel must end its discriminatory measures, not only against the Palestinians in the occupied territories but also against its Arab citizens. In that regard, I wish to refer to the unprecedented draft law on citizenship. Even though it is legal discrimination, Israel nevertheless calls itself the only democracy in the Middle East — as again repeated by the representative of Israel just a few minutes ago.

Jordan, under the direction of its King, is working intensively in close cooperation with the leaders of the region to achieve a ceasefire. We reiterate that the only solution is one that ensures that there is no repetition of the Israeli attacks and aggression. That would be a political solution achieved through the resumption of serious, comprehensive negotiations on the basis of the two-State solution, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil with East Jerusalem as its capital, and on the basis of the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative to achieve security and stability for all the States and peoples of the region.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing and for his efforts to secure peace and protect civilians in the Middle East.

My remarks today will address two areas, Israel and Gaza, and Syria.

First, in Gaza, the United States is working intensively to secure an immediate cessation of hostilities based on the return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. That is the message President Obama gave in his public remarks yesterday. It is the purpose of United States Secretary of State Kerry's trip to Cairo, where he met with Egyptian leaders and the Secretary-General, and is conferring regularly with other allies and partners. It is a goal that the President of the Security Council embraced on behalf of all of the Council's members when we met this past Sunday.

We also recognize that, as we work towards the short-term goal of a ceasefire, we also have to resolve the underlying issues that led to this conflict and ultimately build long-term peace through a two-State solution. Throughout the hostilities we have consistently recognized Israel's right to defend itself against attacks by rockets overhead or through tunnels below. No country in the world would tolerate a relentless of barrage of attacks on its citizens. Yesterday, in a single day, militants fired 155 rockets into Israel. In the two weeks of fighting more than 2,000 rockets have been launched at Israel. On Sunday, Israel foiled another attempt by armed militants to use tunnels to sneak into the country and launch an attack. Again yesterday, militants from Gaza entered Israel and killed four Israeli soldiers.

In Gaza the toll of the violence has been devastating. More than 600 Palestinian people have been killed, the large majority civilians, including at least 59 women and more than 121 children. More than 3,700 more have been injured. Thousands of homes have been damaged, many totally destroyed, and more than 100,000 people have been displaced. As the destruction mounts, some 35,000 Palestinians who need food have not yet been reached, and 1.2 million people have little or no access to water and sanitation. Behind every number is a real person, perhaps even a child. The suffering is immense.

Yet even the most determined efforts to reach those in need have fallen short. The United Nations is near its capacity to take in those without shelter. Relief services are overwhelmed. In short, the situation is unsustainable. That is why a ceasefire, as soon as possible, is essential, as both Secretary Kerry and Secretary-General Ban have emphasized from Cairo.

When we convened on Sunday, the President expressed our shared concern about the growing number of casualties and underscored the need to protect civilians. Yet the violence continues to rise, as does the number of people who suffer from it. Yesterday, Secretary Kerry announced that the United States is providing \$47 million to help address the immediate humanitarian emergency in Gaza. Those funds will provide critical humanitarian aid, including shelter, food and medical supplies for Palestinians in Gaza. We encourage all of our partners in the international community to respond to the humanitarian needs of the people in Gaza and the appeal issued by the United Nations.

All parties to the conflict must comply with international humanitarian law; that means respecting and protecting civilians and humanitarian and medical facilities. By the most recent tally, 77 United Nations structures have been damaged so far in the fighting. Militants in Gaza have repeatedly used civilian facilities for military purposes. Yesterday, a hospital in Gaza was struck by a tank shell, killing at least four people inside.

The humanitarian ceasefires brokered by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross on 18 and 20 July had the potential to provide a reprieve from the violence and enable those in need of food, water and medicine to receive assistance. And yet, given a chance to help alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians, Hamas balked. During both ceasefires, rockets and mortars were launched from Gaza at Israel, and Hamas has so far refused to agree to an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire that could halt the fighting and ease the suffering of innocent people on both sides.

The United Nations supports Egypt's initiative. As grave as the situation is now — and it is indeed grave — it can get worse. If the fighting persists, it will. Humanitarian conditions will continue to deteriorate, more civilians will suffer, and more innocent lives will be lost. The only solution is an immediate ceasefire. This could not be more urgent or more important, given the devastating consequences of the violence for civilian populations. That is why the United States will not rest until a ceasefire is achieved and the underlying issues fueling the conflict are addressed.

On Syria, last week the Council adopted resolution 2165 (2014) in an effort to address the humanitarian devastation and suffering of the Syrian people. United Nations humanitarian agencies will be delivering humanitarian assistance through four additional border crossings and across conflict lines, without the approval of the Syrian regime. United Nations agencies have to be able to reach people in desperate need of assistance in all parts of the country — including those controlled by the opposition — as the Al-Assad regime denies such basic assistance in order to further its military and political goals. We hope that it will make a difference in the lives of several million Syrians who have been without food, medicine and other forms of assistance for more than a year.

As the Council is well aware, the resolution was necessary because of the regime's cynical use of starve-or-surrender tactics and other deliberate strategies to deprive and punish people, particularly those living in contested and opposition-controlled areas. The denial of basic humanitarian aid continues to be one of the deadly weapons in the Al-Assad regime's deadly arsenal. Among the others are chemical and conventional weapons, including air power, tanks, mines and snipers.

We have seen the devastation inflicted when the regime unleashes this arsenal on innocent civilians, as it did in Homs. In recent weeks, we have once again watched in horror as the Al-Assad regime has exercised a stranglehold on the people of Aleppo. Roughly half a million Syrians remain in the city, which has been encircled and slowly asphyxiated by Al-Assad's forces, which have obstructed the flow of basic humanitarian assistance such as food, water and medicine. In addition, the regime has dropped roughly 15 to 20 barrel bombs a day on the city and a similar number on a suburb surrounding it.

As disturbing as the absolute number of bombs dropped is when and where they have been dropped. People in the Aleppo provincial council report that the regime has increasingly concentrated its bombings at the time of day when Muslims are breaking their daily fast — the iftar — and that they have chosen to target the places where people are most likely to congregate. This is obscene. The Al-Assad regime has taken Islam's holiest month and used it to calibrate its bombing runs. It has taken advantage of people's rituals of faith to maximize suffering.

Even by the horrific bar that this regime has set, the malevolence of that pattern is shocking. And Aleppo is not the only place where Al-Assad is using that tactic. In Yarmouk, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was only recently allowed to resume distributing food and other aid to Palestinian refugees after several months of being denied access by the regime. Anyone who has seen photos of the Yarmouk refugees knows that this population's survival hangs by a thread. We are monitoring the situation there, in Aleppo and in other sites closely, and we call on the regime to fully implement resolution 2139 (2014) and to comply with its obligations under resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014), as well as its basic obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

This is a snapshot of two places in the home of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Yet as the cases of Aleppo and Yarmouk demonstrate, these humanitarian problems arise from a political crisis and the barbaric tactics of a regime that has lost the legitimacy to lead. Fixing that crisis will ultimately demand a political solution that Syrians can embrace. To that end, we welcome newly appointed Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy. They have agreed to take on the daunting task of providing good offices towards bringing an end to the violence and human rights violations that plague Syria and promoting a peaceful solution to that longstanding crisis. They have our full support.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea thanks and supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to mediate the ongoing confrontation. We appreciate his video-linked briefing today, taking the time from his hectic trip crisscrossing the Middle East region. We also welcome the participation of the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg.

As we gather in the Council today, the Middle East continues to be marked by expanding conflict and intensifying violence. We are concerned that the ongoing clashes in Israel and Gaza have the potential to further jeopardize regional dynamics, with other non-State actors joining the fray. In that context, we note with concern that rockets have been fired into Israel from Lebanon and Syria.

More than 500 Palestinians and 20 Israelis have now died, and yet there is no sign of a ceasefire to be agreed upon. Hamas has not so far accepted any ceasefire proposals, consequently aggravating the pain and sorrow of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people under its influence. We are also alarmed that the ground operation of the Israeli forces is resulting in an unprecedented level of casualties and displacement throughout the Gaza Strip. Such results do not match Israel's stated goal of a limited operation.

While acknowledging Israel's legitimate security concerns, we emphasize that the current situation illustrates the urgent need for a more fundamental solution of the situation related to Gaza. We are particularly concerned about the devastating humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, Israel's warnings before its attacks do not seem to provide much help to the population, because most of them have nowhere else to go. With

more than 84,000 people seeking shelter, the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are already beyond capacity. Many homes in the safer areas are already full.

The current situation is not sustainable and an immediate ceasefire should enter into force. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and heed the international community's call for peace. We sincerely hope that the unremitting diplomatic efforts of the Secretary-General will soon bear fruit. We support the role of the mediators in the region, including Egypt, in brokering a ceasefire deal.

Turning to the situation in Syria, we are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale of death and destruction as the conflict, which is now in its fourth year, shows no signs of abating. With nearly 11 million Syrians in urgent need of assistance, resolution 2165 (2014) must be immediately and fully implemented so as to enable long overdue cross-border aid deliveries to those in desperate need of food and medicine.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the appointments of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and Deputy Special Envoy Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy. We hope that the Special Envoy will soon start working closely with the key stakeholders and will cooperate with the League of Arab States. We look forward to his sustained efforts to revive the stalled peace negotiations, which is the only way to resolve the crisis.

The Republic of Korea is deeply alarmed about the increase in terrorism and regional instability arising from the situation in Syria. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) now controls broad areas of territory in both Syria and Iraq and poses a threat to Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Jordan. We strongly condemn the egregious war crimes, including the mass executions committed by ISIS. We also note the destructive humanitarian dimensions inherent in such developments. The Security Council must remain vigilant with regard to that issue. We call on Iraq's leaders to swiftly form a new Government that can govern in an inclusive manner and promote the participation of all religious and ethnic minorities.

Despite the seemingly unsurmountable regional situation facing us, we must not lose hope or remain deadlocked in our collective international actions. The Security Council must continue to actively work to ensure peace and security for the people in the region and in the whole world.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement and associate myself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I will talk about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the situation in Syria and, finally, Lebanon and Iraq.

On the fifteenth day of open war between Israel and Hamas, the conclusion of a ceasefire can no longer wait and must allow the resumption of efforts to achieve a fundamental solution. The toll is overwhelming. On the Israeli side, there is a population that lives in fear of rocket fire. On the Palestinian side, there are hundreds of dead and more than 100,000 displaced persons. Neighbourhoods such as Shujaiya have become symbols of the intense Israeli operations.

It is the third offensive waged by Israel on the Gaza Strip since 2008. As on the previous occasions, in the current situation no one can win. Hamas cannot win because, by choosing to continue the escalation, it has achieved only one thing — the triggering of Israeli fire on Gaza. It did so deliberately, since Hamas knew what Israel's response to hundreds of rockets fired towards its territory would be. Israel cannot win because the ground offensive launched last week will only weaken but not dismantle the capability of Hamas or discredit it. It may even emerge stronger from the show of force in the eyes of a population that knows only Israel's missiles, soldiers and tanks. Finally, the civilian population of Gaza, in particular and once again, is the main victim with heavier casualties every day and the subsequent insecurity, exacerbated by the ongoing destruction. As the President of the French Republic underscored, everything must be done to put an immediate end to the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza.

As the Secretary-General has said, our immediate priority is the conclusion of a ceasefire on the basis of the Egyptian proposal, supported by the League of Arab States. Intense diplomatic efforts are under way in many regional capitals, led by several senior officials. The regional mediation efforts should be united. The Secretary-General, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, this weekend, and now Secretary of State Kerry are in or have visited the region. We hope that their efforts will quickly succeed. That will mean, first, an immediate end to the firing of rockets by Hamas on Israel, whose security is an absolute right, and, secondly, an immediate cessation of the Israeli offensive. Israel is indeed targeting Hamas — an organization that France and its European partners has recognized as terrorists.

However, the facts are clear. There are now more than 580 dead, 75 per cent of whom were civilians, according to the United Nations, many of whom were children. That violates the legal imperative to protect civilians. Yet we know that a ceasefire will not suffice. A lasting truce that addresses the root causes of the conflict and the legitimate concerns of the parties and allows a relaunching of the peace process must be concluded. Israel's security must be guaranteed, which, in particular, means a more effective fight against arms trafficking. Gaza must be able to resume its way of life, since poverty, despair and inactivity swell the ranks of Hamas more than they weaken it. It is therefore important to work towards lifting the blockade and the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access of 2005, endorsed by resolution 1860 (2009).

The European Union could contribute to that by reactivating the European Union Border Assistance Mission at Rafah, as France has proposed. It is clearly important to involve the Palestinian Authority in a way out of the crisis. The reconstruction efforts and the lifting of the blockade must be coordinated with Mr. Abbas. Finally, most importantly, it is necessary to work for a political settlement, which is the only way to stop what we have seen on three occasions since 2008, that is, a tragic repetition of outbreaks of violence.

Today is the last open debate on the Middle East in which I shall participate. Allow me to move for a moment from the bloody turbulence of a somewhat repetitive situation to recall the basic facts of the conflict. For 20 years, with infinite patience, resolve and imagination, we have tried to put an end to the conflict by convincing the two parties to negotiate directly without international intervention. God alone knows the number of initiatives and formulas that have been tried and proposed in vain.

The time has therefore come to conclude that such laudable efforts have failed because the method was wrong. Israelis and Palestinians will never achieve peace by themselves. The reasons are too numerous and, I would say, too evident for me to list. It is not a question, and I underscore this point, of resorting to some kind of pressure on the parties. That will not work.

On the contrary, it is a matter of the entire international community proposing a positive agenda to the two parties to encourage them to move towards the path of peace. One side fears for its security and

the other for its national existence. The Americans, Europeans and Arabs can all address those concerns. Integration, joining regional bodies, financial assistance, the guarantee of security and opening full diplomatic relations are all proposals to explore. However, there are others. We must convince the man in the street in Tel Aviv and Gaza that peace is not a leap into the unknown or capitulation but entering a new world. Rather than endlessly mending the engine of the same vehicle, as the negotiators — who, moreover, are often the same — have been doing for the past 20 years, we must change the vehicle. We need new ideas that seek, first, to break down the wall of fear, distrust and hatred that prevents any progress and leave a way out for the extremists on both sides. Until the man in the street demands peace, there will be no peace. It may be too late, I fear, but the entire international community will then shoulder the responsibility of the long tragedy that will be the future of the Holy Land.

In Syria, the tragedy continues in a country that disappears a little more every day under the regime's bombardment. All reports on the implementation of resolution 2139 (2014) are unequivocal. The situation of the civilian population has not improved. The sieges of towns, three-quarters of which have not stopped or even reduced owing to the regime, the indiscriminate bombing, including by barrel bombs, which is a direct and flagrant violation of resolution 2139 (2014), the torture, the policy of terror against civilians and the obstacles to humanitarian access continue.

The adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) should improve the delivery of humanitarian aid, which must be sent by the most direct routes, whether through the frontlines or across borders from the neighbouring countries. However, only a political solution will bring an end to the conflict. France welcomes the appointment of Mr. de Mistura to succeed Mr. Brahimi, whom we thank for his efforts.

Our collective political objective remains the same, namely, a political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, based on the full implementation of the Geneva final communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Finally, France emphasizes that the thousands of crimes committed in Syria must not go unpunished. The Council was unable to agree on the French proposal to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court; nevertheless, those who are responsible for crimes in

Syria, whoever they are and whatever side they are on, should know that they will be judged.

In that context, we must also send a message of support for Lebanon, which should not be dragged into the spiral of the Syrian crisis. The dissociation policy and the 2012 Baabda Declaration provide the framework within which all Lebanese forces must operate.

Faced with the Syrian crisis, France welcomes the generosity of Lebanon and underlines the burden that hosting more than 1 million refugees represents. Lebanon needs the support of its international partners.

We also call on Lebanon to meet its internal constitutional deadlines. We recall the importance of the fight against impunity and welcome in that respect the role of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which is expected to resume its activities on 18 June 2015.

I conclude with a word on Iraq, on which the Security Council issued a statement to the press yesterday at the initiative of France. France is obviously deeply concerned about the progress of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which constitutes a threat to the integrity of Iraq and to the stability of the entire region. That progress could also further strengthen the attractiveness of the Syrian-Iraqi theatre for jihad candidates, who pose a threat to the international community as a whole.

France condemns in the strongest terms the atrocities committed by ISIL against ethnic and religious minorities and those who do not adhere to its barbaric ideology, including, specifically, the ultimatum given to Christians in Mosul, one of the oldest Christian communities of the world, with which France has maintained relations for several centuries. The ultimatum is a further illustration of the true nature of that terrorist organization. France supports the State of Iraq in its fight against terrorism and believes that a sustainable response to the crisis must be primarily political.

It is urgent today that conditions be created in Iraq for an inclusive political dialogue that brings together all communities in order to meet the challenges facing the country. The alternative is clear. Either there is no change in the governance of the country and we will then likely see the breakup of Iraq, or a national unity Government is promptly formed involving all communities and a political solution will prevail.

The election of the new Speaker of the Parliament is a positive development, but much remains to be done to

see a way out of the crisis. It is essential that the process provided for by the Constitution be pursued and that it lead as soon as possible to a coalition Government, if we are to expect Iraq to recover.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. China appreciates and supports his good offices. I have also listened very carefully to the statements made by the Observer of the State of Palestine and the representative of Israel.

Israel's military operation in Gaza has lasted for half a month. In spite of repeated appeals by the Security Council and the international community, the Israeli military operation has continued to expand in scope, resulting in a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. China is deeply concerned and saddened by the situation.

China is resolutely opposed to any use of force against civilians and is particularly opposed to targeting residential areas and hospitals. Such actions, which violate international humanitarian law, are unacceptable.

China urges the parties concerned to stop firing rockets into Israel. The vicious cycle of violence for violence between Israel and Palestine must stop. China urges Israel, Palestine and other parties to respond in good faith to the appeals of the international community and cooperate with international good offices, achieve an immediate unconditional ceasefire and refrain from taking any actions that might escalate tensions, so that calm can be achieved as soon as possible.

China urges the international community to step up its humanitarian assistance and calls for the opening of all crossings in Gaza and the provision of all facilities for humanitarian relief in order to ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The negative effect of the conflict in Gaza has begun to spill over into Syria, with security implications for the borders between Lebanon and Israel and between Syria and Israel. That has seriously threatened regional peace and security. The Security Council and the international community should take action to change that situation. China supports the continued constructive role played by Egypt and other countries in pushing for a ceasefire.

China's Special Envoy for the Middle East is now visiting several countries in the region and is bringing influence to bear on the parties concerned, with a view

to bringing about a ceasefire, a cessation of violence and peace talks. China is actively following up on the new delivery of humanitarian relief to Palestine.

China hopes that the relevant players of the international community will enhance coordination and work in synergy to achieve a ceasefire and the easing of tension. China has always believed that the coexistence of the two countries, Israel and Palestine — to be achieved through peace talks — is the only and correct way to resolve the Palestinian issue. It is also in the fundamental interests of both sides.

We hope that Israel and Palestine will end their conflict soon and make efforts to address the deep-seated problems in their bilateral relations in order to avoid a repetition of tragedies. We urge Israel to stop its settlement activities and release detained Palestinians so as to create conditions for the restarting of the peace talks. We are ready to join with the international community to work unremittingly for a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution of the problems in the Middle East.

China is following closely the situation in Syria. We feel deeply for the suffering of its people. We welcome resolution 2165 (2014), adopted not long ago by the Security Council, on the humanitarian issue in Syria. China has always believed that a political solution is the only way out of the Syrian problem. The international community should stay the course to work out a political settlement on the question of Syria, continue to engage in coordination and cooperation and sustain its positive efforts. China calls on all parties in Syria to implement the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) as soon as possible, start an inclusive political transition and find a middle path that takes into account the interests of all sides and which is based on the country's conditions, so as to achieve a political solution of the Syrian problem.

China welcomes the appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Staffan de Mistura as the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and Ambassador Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy as the Deputy Special Envoy. We will continue to enhance cooperation with the relevant players of the international community to work towards a proper solution of the Syrian problem.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): The situation across the Middle East gives us all cause for grave concern. Violence and humanitarian crises have escalated and engulfed millions of innocent people in the region. It is deeply tragic that so many have been

killed and injured in the current crisis in Gaza. We urge both sides to do their utmost to de-escalate the situation and avoid further injury and loss of innocent life. The people of Israel have the right to live without constant fear for their security, but the people of Gaza also have the right to live safely in peace.

We condemn the rocket attacks on Israel targeting civilians in contravention of all humanitarian law and norms. We deplore Hamas's rejection of ceasefire efforts to date. All those with influence over Hamas must use it to get Hamas to agree to end rocket fire and join an immediate ceasefire.

We fully support Israel's right to take proportionate action to defend itself from indiscriminate rocket attacks and attempts to infiltrate Israel through tunnels, but it is vital that Gaza's civilian population be protected. The number of civilian casualties is now above 600. In particular, the military action in Shujaiya on Sunday exacted a terrible human cost. Israel must do everything it can to avoid civilian casualties, to exercise restraint and to bring this situation to an end.

We welcome Egyptian efforts to secure a ceasefire agreement. We encourage Egypt to persist with its efforts, and others to work closely together with them. We also applaud the Secretary-General's commitment to helping to secure a ceasefire, including through his visit to the region, and the United Nations efforts to broker humanitarian pauses. We also welcome President Abbas' support for an immediate ceasefire.

Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable civilians in Gaza are suffering acutely in this crisis and bear no responsibility for the rocket fire. At least 100,000 Gazans have been displaced by the conflict. Hundreds of thousands are suffering shortages of water, sanitation and electricity. The United Kingdom will provide \$3 million in new funding to help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East supply immediate emergency assistance for over 84,000 people who are seeking shelter in its schools. We are also bringing forward over \$4 million in funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide emergency health care and to repair water wells and pipelines damaged by the air strikes.

This situation is grimly familiar. It is the third major military operation in Gaza in six years. The priority must be to achieve a durable ceasefire that ends this cycle of violence. A ceasefire agreement must address the underlying causes of the crisis. It needs to

secure the full implementation of both resolution 1860 (2009) and the November 2012 ceasefire agreement. There will need to be concerted action to get a grip on the security situation and open up Gaza's economy. The Palestinian Authority must return to Gaza. None of this will be easy, but without it we are bound to see another repeat of this crisis.

We cannot forget the appalling violence that continues elsewhere in the Middle East. The Syrian regime's relentless brutality has created an environment where violent extremism is taking hold. What is happening in Syria is not and has never been about terrorism. It is about the legitimate demands of the Syrian people and their desire for the basic rights of freedom and dignity. But Al-Assad's regime responds to demands with horrendous brutality. Now, Syria is the number one destination for jihadists anywhere in the world, and the violence is spreading beyond Syria's borders. Let us be clear. Al-Assad is not the answer to the terrorist threat; he is the cause of it. The advance of such violent extremists in the region underscores the need to support moderate groups in Syria. These moderate groups are the only forces fighting extremists and Al-Assad's tyranny.

The Council has taken a major step forward to help alleviate some of the horrors facing ordinary Syrians. With the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), many Syrians will soon receive the food and medical supplies they desperately need. It is vital that the United Nations rapidly deploy its monitoring mission so that aid can begin to flow through the additional crossings. We welcome assurances from the Syrian National Coalition and the Free Syrian Army that they will implement resolution 2165 (2014) in order to help aid reach those in urgent need of assistance.

We know that a lasting solution to the Syrian crisis will come from a political solution. We welcome newly appointed United Nations Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and urge all parties to work closely towards a Syrian-led political transition. We commend the Syrian National Coalition on the recent election of its President, Mr. Hadi Al-Bahra. Along with our partners, we will continue to provide practical technical and political support to the Syrian National Coalition.

Syria will know a stable peace only when those responsible for atrocities are held to account. In that context, we welcome the recent resolution of the Human Rights Council, and we will continue to work

ensure that victims receive justice, including at the International Criminal Court.

Finally, we utterly condemn the reported atrocities committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has advanced through western and northern Iraq, displacing an estimated 650,000 people. We note with grave concern the events in Mosul this past weekend. ISIL's threats against the Christian community in particular, which has been in Mosul for nearly 2,000 years, are horrific. As the Secretary-General has said, systematic attacks on civilians because of their faith or religious beliefs may constitute crimes against humanity. ISIL poses a grave threat to the local population, to the security, stability and territorial integrity of the State, and to the wider region. The single most important factor that will determine whether Iraq overcomes this challenge is political unity. It is therefore vital that a new, inclusive Government be formed as soon as possible.

I commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Nikolay Mladenov, and urge Iraq's politicians to ensure that a President and Prime Minister are appointed as soon as possible.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our meeting today underscores the fact that it is unacceptable, against the backdrop of the upheavals in the Middle East, to relegate the Israeli-Palestinian, and the Arab-Israeli settlement more generally, to the back burner. They are key to the stability, well-being, prosperity and flourishing of all people and Governments of the Middle East.

The international community is shocked by the scale of the human tragedy in the Gaza Strip. The dead number in the hundreds and the wounded in the thousands. The majority are peaceful Palestinian civilians killed as a result of the disproportionate use of force by Israel. There is also continuous rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and civilians there — Israelis — are also targeted. These actions are inadmissible and cannot be justified. There must now be a speedy end to the suffering of peaceful Palestinians and Israelis and to the destruction of State infrastructure. The scale of loss and destruction requires urgent action on the part of the international community.

We welcome the Secretary-General's mission to the Middle East. We support Egypt's efforts to achieve a ceasefire between Gaza and Israel. We thank the United Nations agencies in the Gaza Strip for their

activities to minimize the humanitarian impacts of the current dangerous spike in confrontation. For our part, we continue to work actively through all channels with the parties to the conflict and representatives of the international Quartet of mediators to end all violence in a timely manner, de-escalate the situation, lay the foundation for a subsequent ceasefire, and facilitate the establishment of conditions necessary to a comprehensive negotiating process between Palestinian and Israel. Consultations are currently ongoing in the region with the special representative of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who plans to engage in contacts with Israel and Palestinian, as well as with United Nations personnel.

Two days ago, the President of the Security Council called for a swift cessation of military confrontation on the basis of a return to the agreement of November 2012. We are convinced that a swift and viable ceasefire would ensure the security of Israel and all its citizens, the security of the people of the Gaza Strip, an improvement in the humanitarian situation there, and the possible lifting of the blockade of Palestinian territory.

We feel that the appeal of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to the Secretary-General for Palestine to be made an international protectorate should be accorded serious attention. We are ready to consider the proposals being prepared by the League of Arab States regarding the role to be played by the Security Council in the current situation. We are frankly surprised that we heard no reference to those proposals in the statement made today by the representative of Jordan.

There is a need to move forward towards resolving the issue of a lasting Palestinian-Israeli settlement, which should be based on the concept of two States living side by side in peace and cooperation and the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and with close international support for the peace process from the Middle East Quartet, in close cooperation with the League of Arab States. The task of intra-Palestinian reconciliation is of particular importance in that regard, especially to establish an integral, sustainable and properly functioning Government of national unity. That would be in line with the interests of Israel's security concerns.

We welcome the appointment of Staffan de Mistura as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. We hope that he will make a significant contribution to the Syrian political process. Unfortunately, however,

the situation on the ground continues to be of great concern. We are especially concerned about terrorist activity gaining ground in Syria and in the region as whole. We condemn last week's abduction by fighters of the Islamic State of a large gas field in Shaar, Homs governorate. That was accompanied by a massive attack on soldiers and rebels guarding the facility, as well as staff. According to various sources, approximately 300 people were killed. The incident once again serves to underscore the imperative need to adopt Russia's draft presidential statement on the inadmissibility of engaging in oil transactions with terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.

We are insulted by the odious threat of acts of terrorism against United Nations staff in the Golan Heights. We call on those who sponsor or train terrorist fighters in the region, first and foremost the Jabhat Al-Nusra, to rein in their subordinates and to make it absolutely clear to them that threats against United Nations peacekeepers are brazen threats to the international community.

Recent events underscore the worrying trend of the region becoming an epicentre for terrorist activity. Extremists of various types are attempting to capitalize on the turbulent events in the Middle East, which are rooted in social problems, in people not having a choice of lifestyle other than crime, and the fanning of the flames of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict. The fabric of terrorism is being woven at breakneck speed in areas of conflict. Terrorism is spilling over beyond State borders, including extremist organizations and foreign fighters. The so-called management of terrorist flows has demonstrated its fallacy when organizations such as Jabhat Al-Nusra or the Islamic State are banned in one country but it is felt that it is possible to live with their activities in other countries, such as in Syria, or even to fuel them. A business approach to the issue is unacceptable.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I believe we owe the Secretary-General a debt of gratitude, not only for his efforts in the Middle East but especially for his briefing this morning. We also want to thank Minister Asselborn for his presence and for labouring with the Security Council for a second consecutive day.

My comments will focus on the questions of Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria.

The death toll in the war between Hamas and Israel is mounting at an alarming rate. The humanitarian

dimension of the conflict on the Palestinian side has reached crisis levels; thousands have been displaced. Health facilities have been stretched beyond their capacities and medicines are in short supply. Those problems have been compounded by acute shortages of water and electricity, as well as the massive destruction of infrastructure and residential buildings. The net result is that residents of Gaza face untold hardship.

As with every sovereign State, Israel has an inherent right to defend itself and to keep its citizens safe. However, we view its military response in Gaza as needlessly excessive and in violation of international humanitarian law. There can be no justification whatever for the wanton and unrelenting killing of civilians, including women, children and senior citizens. We call for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The immediate cause-and-effect relationship of this conflict cannot be ignored. The indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas amount to a violation of international humanitarian law. Firing rockets against non-military targets serves no purpose other than to terrorize civilians. That is unacceptable, and we urge Hamas to put an immediate halt to those attacks.

The cycle of violence will not solve any problem; it can lead only to a hardening of positions, which will not serve the long-term interests of either party. We call for an urgent de-escalation of the conflict and a cessation of hostilities. Leaders on both sides must demonstrate maximum restraint, both in their actions and utterances. There must be an intensification of diplomatic efforts to end the conflict. We therefore urge leaders around the world to bring their influence to bear on the situation, in the hope that such efforts will facilitate a return to the November 2012 ceasefire.

The Secretary-General's shuttle diplomacy and engagement with leaders in the region provides for us a ray of hope. We express our full support for his relentless efforts. We also welcome the Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire and note that Israel has accepted it. We urge Hamas also to accept it. In the current circumstances, a ceasefire represents the best opportunity for a cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue. Indeed, the Secretary-General's summary constitutes the guidelines for the contending parties. He said, in summary, stop the fighting, start a dialogue and address the root causes.

The situation in Yemen is part of the Middle East calculus. Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups continue to pose a challenge to the efforts of the Government to restore stability. In addition to the attacks by terrorists on civilians and security forces, the country is embroiled in a conflict with separatists in the south and Houthi militias in the north. We strongly condemn the activities of the armed groups in Amran, which have left scores dead and displaced families. According to the Yemeni Red Crescent, 15,000 families have already fled the fighting. That situation underscores the need for the Yemeni authorities to expedite action in the implementation of the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference, which have clearly addressed the roots of the conflict.

We see a silver lining in the cloud, that is, the political transition process, which has remained on course in spite of the security challenges. The confidence-building measures being undertaken by the Government are commendable. We take particular note of the steps to implement the 20 points recommended by the National Dialogue Conference preparatory technical committee, as well as the 11 points appointed recommended by the Conference on the southern and Sa'ada issues. We welcome the Government's designation of a competent authority to implement the recommendations of the Conference. That is a reassuring sign that the Government is committed to building a united, peaceful and prosperous Yemen.

We take positive note of the two-day regional conference on transitional justice held in June jointly by Yemen's Ministry for Legal Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The conference was designed to discuss transitional justice law and its implementation. According to various reports, the topics addressed were the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and their relationship with immunity laws, transitional justice, democratic transition and the role of international actors and civil society.

Transitional justice is a very important aspect of Yemen's political process. We commend the Government for its involvement in organizing the Conference, and the United Nations agencies for collaborating with the Government to hold the event. We acknowledge the support provided by Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the European Union and the

United Nations Peacebuilding Fund to the transitional justice project in Yemen.

Turning to the situation in Lebanon, we note that the political situation remains very delicate. We are deeply concerned by the current presidential crisis, which could, if not urgently resolved, threaten the stability of the country. As the attention of the world is focused on more dramatic developments in other parts of the Middle East, including the war in Syria, the insurgency of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in Iraq and the escalation of tension between Israel and Palestine, the potential dangers of the Lebanese situation could be ignored.

The presidency of Lebanon has traditionally been considered as one that should unify the country, building bridges between the various communities. That is why it is very important for political actors to agree on who takes the mantle of the presidency. So far, eight sessions of Parliament have been held without a President being elected. That has created a political vacuum since 25 May, when President Suleiman ended his term as President. We understand that the Speaker of Parliament has scheduled a ninth session of Parliament for 23 July. It is our hope that consensus will have been reached on who will become President before that date. We urge the leaders of Lebanon to walk together in the interests of their country and to elect a successor without delay.

Nigeria remains deeply concerned about the conflict in Syria, which has caused the deaths of thousands and displaced many more. We welcome the unanimous adoption by the Council of resolution 2165 (2014), on humanitarian access in Syria. That indeed is a true reflection of the determination of the Council to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The resolution requires both sides to the conflict to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance by United Nations humanitarian agencies. We expect that, in the process of carrying out relief activities, humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations, will respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. We hope that the relevant parties in Syria will work closely with United Nations humanitarian institutions and take effective and concrete measures to implement resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014).

We have been very unequivocal in our position that a military solution in Syria is unattainable. Comprehensive negotiations remain the most viable

means to a sustainable resolution of the Syrian crisis. The international community must continue to work towards a political settlement through dialogue and avoid a militarization of the conflict in Syria. In the current circumstances, the 30 June 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) offers the best way forward. We urge all parties to work towards its implementation. We welcome the appointment of Mr. de Mistura as the new Special Envoy for Syria, and call on the parties to utilize his good offices and his wealth of experience to achieve an amicable solution to the crisis.

The Middle East today must retreat from the very dangerous precipice on which it has been standing for too long. The time is now, and we are all summoned to united collective action for durable peace.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his efforts. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, who are present in here in the Hall, and thank them for their statements.

I shall make some brief remarks about Syria and then focus on the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

With regard to Syria, Argentina deeply regrets that we have had to adopt a new resolution on the humanitarian crisis. That was the result of the non-compliance with resolution 2139 (2014) and the increase in the suffering of the Syrian people. However, we value in particular the fact that the Council assumed its responsibilities with regard to a situation that has undermined its credibility and cast a doubt over its authority. We hope and demand that this time the voice of the Council be heard.

We would like to take this opportunity to underscore the fact that, despite the profound differences among its members, the Security Council has been able to speak with one voice in dealing with the effects of the crisis: demanding access for assistance, reacting quickly each time incidents occurred in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and recognizing and strongly supporting the Government and the people of Lebanon and the countries that are receiving refugees. No less important is the fact that the Security Council has been able to be at the forefront of the complex process of eliminating Syria's chemical weapons programme, which is already in its final stages.

While we recognize that it is not easy, we hope those elements can lay the foundation for a common vision so that the Council can contribute not only to addressing the consequences of the crisis, but also to understanding its causes and offering solutions, thereby concretely and effectively assisting the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to whom we offer our support. His success will not only make it possible to contribute towards the building of a better future for Syria, but will be key for the achievement of peace and security in the entire region.

This open debate undoubtedly comes at a time of great upheaval in the Middle East, which is being torn apart by violence, the exacerbation of sectarian tension, the indiscriminate abuse of militarism and the increase in various types of extremism. In that environment of uncertainty, for the third time in less than six years Gaza has again been plunged into violence. Once again, it is civilians who are paying the price for the disproportionate use of military force by Israel. Once again, there are unacceptable acts by Hamas. And once again, there is despair and death. Sooner or later, there will once again be calm. And once again, there will be the certainty that violence will return unless the causes that made it possible are eradicated and the eternal cycle of a pattern of abuse and intolerance, which is repeated all too often, is broken.

Despite the calls by the Council and other voices of the international community, instead of moderation, all that we have seen has been an intensification in the fighting and an open defiance of the obligations incumbent by way of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the protection civilians.

As it could not be any other way, the immediate result of Israel's ground offensive in Gaza and the bombing that accompanied it, was the sharp increase in the number of fatalities, the vast majority of whom were civilians, including an intolerable number of children. What happened in Shujaiya on Sunday cannot be described as anything other than a massacre — one more in the long history of Palestine — which we condemn in the strongest terms. That and all allegations of excesses, abuses and violations of international law must be investigated and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We must ensure that there is justice for all.

The incursion has also increased the number of displaced people, has had repercussions throughout the region and has deepened the humanitarian crisis,

which exceeds the international community's ability to respond. More than 1 million people are affected by a lack of adequate access to water and sanitation services, while 80 per cent of the people in Gaza have electricity only four hours per day. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools have stopped being centres for learning in order to become improvised refugee camps.

It is therefore clear that our responsibility is to demand an immediate cessation of hostilities, strict respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, and the protection of civilians. That means that Israel must put an end to its military operations and the disproportionate use of force in Gaza, and it also means that both Hamas and the Islamic Jihad must put an end to the indiscriminate launching of rockets against Israel.

We therefore reiterate our support for the peace initiatives currently under way. History and geography have assigned to Egypt a key role in these efforts, but it is clear that other regional and international actors with influence on the parties should be prepared to use that influence in order to find a way out.

We welcome in this respect the decision of the Secretary-General to travel to the region, and we hope that his efforts will yield favourable results and make it possible to move towards what both the General Assembly and the Council have presented as not only a possible but also a desirable and necessary way out in order to put this long-standing conflict behind us.

Our priority objective here is to restore calm, and yet we cannot allow ourselves to consent to a return to things as they were before the crisis. It is neither viable nor sustainable for Gaza to continue to be an economic and political shut-in, with 40 per cent of its people without work or income and subject to food insecurity, a sanitary and energy crisis, and a lack of conditions conducive to promoting economic development with full social inclusion and human rights.

Given that the horizon is receding due to the frustrating path that has been tread over and over, the question is not if there will be another outbreak of violence, but when there will be one. This renewed crisis should be a strong wake-up call to address, comprehensively, the root causes that led to the outbreak of the conflict. The paths to this goal were already laid out by the Security Council in its resolution 1860 (2009). The time has come to support its implementation

in all its dimensions, that is, allow the unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance; ensure the sustained and regular flow of goods and persons through the borders; and prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition.

Learning from recent experience and in order to guarantee effective compliance, it will also be key to establish an international mechanism to monitor these and other measures that may be agreed on as part of the initiatives under way.

No less important will be achieving a single Palestinian Authority, so that it can govern effectively also in Gaza, because while our objective remains a two-State solution, reunification of the Palestinian political system is in that context not a problem but part of the solution. It would be unfortunate, therefore, if one of the fatalities of the tragedy we are experiencing were to be the incipient process of Palestinian reconciliation, which we have so strongly stressed and on which we have so intensively laboured.

As we clamour for an active role on the part of countries, leaders and organizations to resolve this crisis, we expect the same from the Security Council. We have said it every single time we have met in order to address this situation, and we reiterate it again today. We believe that the Security Council, assuming the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter, can and should more firmly support the efforts undertaken to achieve a ceasefire, ensure compliance with it and, finally, to help to create the necessary conditions so that both sides can renew their dialogue with a view to bringing about a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, which is the only guarantee for lasting peace and security.

In this regard, we should ask ourselves the question: what is the point of the Security Council if the maintenance of international peace and security becomes a mere matter of a few ad hoc mechanisms? We are far from opposing bilateral diplomacy or the diplomacy of groups of States or other organizations, but it should not be at the cost of rendering the Security Council an institution devoid of meaning and incapable of having an impact on conflict resolution. It is about finding complementary, convergent and effective strategies, based on strategic solidarity.

Argentina believes in real multilateralism that is most truly represented in our Organization. It cannot be conceived of as an obstacle to achieving a more just

and peaceful world. It is not a case of multilateralism versus bilateral relations, nor is it multilateralism versus regional organizations. Each of these dimensions and strategies must be brought together and coordinated with a common goal, but at the same time it should be recognized that it is multilateralism that ensures that all States and peoples, without exception, can be heard and recognized as equal in dignity and in rights.

In this context, since the press statement issued on 12 July by the Council had no impact, perhaps we should speak more loudly and with a single voice in order to demand, along with the other tools at our disposal, a ceasefire, that international law be respected, that an end be put to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, and that civilians be protected.

Argentina is prepared to comply with this goal. In that context, given the tools available to us, Argentina would here respectfully address the members of the Security Council to propose that the Council use all the tools available to it. As it has the lofty task of maintaining international peace and security, it should consider the possibility of conducting a mission to the countries of the region in order to support, and give a renewed impetus to, the efforts to bring about a ceasefire, including a visit to Gaza in order to see first-hand the ravages of the armed conflict. We must support all who are working towards a lasting peace in two States living in reciprocal mutual respect, in security, safety and prosperity.

I would ask that the Security Council consider this proposal. Argentina wishes to honour the commitments it undertook when it was elected to this body. We believe that the ethics of conviction and responsibility are not two different things; they are two sides of the same coin, so we must be consistent.

Ms. King (Australia): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing this morning.

The major escalation in hostilities between Israel and militant groups in Gaza in recent days is of course deeply troubling and reminds us of the urgency of all the efforts that are currently directed towards stopping the violence.

We are seriously concerned about the growing number of casualties on both sides, including many Palestinian civilians, a significant number of Israeli soldiers and several Israeli civilians. Everything possible should be done to prevent civilian casualties and to limit the suffering of innocent people, including

those displaced by the fighting. All sides must respect international humanitarian law.

We strongly condemn Hamas and other militants' continued rocket attacks on Israel, with the total number of such rocket launches now numbering over 1,850. The decision of Hamas to reject the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire proposals, and its use of civilian facilities such as United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools to launch attacks on Israel, are inexcusable. We recognize the increased burden on UNRWA as a result of the current crisis.

We support Israel's right to defend itself in the face of such attacks. No country can be expected to stand by and tolerate such sustained attacks directed at civilian areas. In doing so, Israel needs to take all the necessary steps to prevent civilian casualties.

Australia strongly supports efforts to secure an immediate ceasefire. We endorse and welcome the personal efforts of the Secretary-General in travelling to the region and seeking an end to the violence. We also welcome the efforts of United States Secretary of State Kerry in seeking to broker a ceasefire, as well as the efforts of French Foreign Minister Fabius and others. The sustained high-level engagement reflects the international community's deep distress at the violence, its absolute determination to assist in ending it and to build the conditions for a sustainable peace. Hamas must engage with those international efforts to resolve the crisis. Once a ceasefire is achieved, the international community needs to find a way to help the Israelis and the Palestinians return to negotiations on the two-State solution. The absence of a political dialogue runs the serious risk of further deterioration in security conditions in future.

Australia welcomes the Council's adoption last week of resolution 2165 (2014), on the worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria. That outcome reflects the extent of the Council's determination to alleviate the human suffering in Syria despite the political obstacles that have hampered the Council's ability to act decisively to prevent the crisis. By making it clear that United Nations agencies and their partners are authorized to deliver humanitarian assistance across the four nominated border crossings, and across conflict lines, we hope the estimated additional 2.9 million people can be reached with life-saving assistance. We commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

and the United Nations system for their quick action in operationalizing resolution 2165 (2014), in difficult circumstances. All parties are obliged to respect and protect the safety and security of humanitarian workers in accordance with the resolution.

That resolution was necessary, however, only because of the immeasurable failure of the parties to the Syrian conflict — and the Assad regime in particular — to adhere to the decisions of the Council, to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and to protect the lives of Syrian civilians. The continued violations of human rights by regime forces and terrorist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), are abhorrent. The international community's determination to see this turned around was expressed in resolution 2165 (2014). There can be no excuses for continued non-compliance.

This month the last of Syria's declared precursor chemicals were removed for destruction. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) monitoring mission and those States that have contributed to that outcome. We urge the Syrian regime to complete its declaration and finalize plans for the destruction of its chemical facilities with the OPCW.

A political solution to the crisis is urgently needed. The presidential elections in June, from which many Syrians citizens were excluded, lacked credibility and, as former Joint Special Representative Brahimi told us, have taken us further away from a political solution to the crisis. That is a significant challenge that the Secretary-General's new Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, will need to address. Australia welcomes Mr. de Mistura's appointment, along with that of Deputy Special Envoy Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, and looks forward to supporting their efforts to find a way to end the violence in Syria. We urge States in the region to offer them their full support, which will be crucial to the success of any future political track.

It is deeply concerning that large parts of Syria and Iraq are now ungoverned and controlled by a terrorist organization, namely, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. That will continue to be a major security and political challenge for the international community as well as for the peoples of Syria and Iraq, who have suffered appalling atrocities at the hands of those terrorists. All United Nations States Members must adhere to their obligations under resolution 1267 (1999),

which established the Al-Qaida sanctions regime, and must cut off funding and weapons to ISIL.

The displacement of close to 1 million Iraqis, in addition to those fleeing from Syria as a result of the conflict, represents a significant humanitarian crisis. In order to respond effectively to those challenges, it is important that a new Iraqi Government be formed as soon as possible and that it adopt a unified, national approach. Australia welcomes the nomination of a Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, a constructive first step towards that objective. The United Nations is uniquely placed to provide assistance to Iraq's political leaders as they work towards the formation of an inclusive new national Government. We strongly support the Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mladenov in their efforts to assist Iraqis in addressing their current security and political challenges and building a unified and secure country.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like first of all to thank the Secretary-General for the information he presented to us this morning, as well as the statements made by my colleagues from Palestine and Israel.

In less than two weeks we have met urgently more than three times to address the latest developments in Gaza. Despite our urgent calls for an immediate ceasefire, and despite the efforts of the Secretary-General and the diplomatic pressure that has been brought to bear, instead of establishing a truce, the parties have decided to escalate the conflict. Chile condemns the escalation of violence affecting the Middle East, Israel's disproportionate use of force in densely populated areas and the indiscriminate use of rockets by Hamas. This is a conflict in which neither of the parties will achieve its goals, but one that will exact a high cost in innocent victims.

We urgently call on all the parties to fulfil their international obligations with respect to the protection of the civilian population. As we indicated last Friday (see S/PV.7220), we believe that attacks on civilians, in Gaza or in Israel, violate international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. We also noted the need for United Nations personnel on the ground to have proper protection.

Given the recent discovery by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East of some 20 rockets being housed in a school

and yesterday's attack on a hospital in the city of Deir Al-Balah, we reiterate our call for the parties to take urgent measures to halt attacks on schools and hospitals and their military use, in accordance with resolution 2134 (2014).

My country is particularly concerned by the growing number of civilian victims and by the grave humanitarian situation that affects the residents of the Gaza Strip. For that reason, in order to assist the innocent victims of the conflict, we have made available \$150,000 to the United Nations agencies working in the area under the umbrella of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Chile believes that it is critically important to open all the border crossings in the Gaza Strip, including Rafah. It has been interesting to hear members of the Council express the view that, once a ceasefire is achieved, there needs to be adequate measures to ensure its implementation, which could also be used to guarantee the peaceful use of the border crossings.

As the Secretary-General has observed, once a ceasefire is achieved, it would be unacceptable to return to the status quo. We insist that it is absolutely vital that the Council address the root causes of the conflict.

Chile notes the letter sent by President Abbas to the Secretary-General, which requests that Palestine be put under an international protection system administered by the United Nations. There is a broad consensus in the international community regarding the main obstacles to peace, including the construction and expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, considered illegal according to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. That and other elements have led to an environment of extreme hostility, which makes dialogue difficult, isolating moderate voices who promote peace in Israel and Palestine and pushing farther away the desired two-State solution.

The region cannot withstand more conflict. Along those lines, Chile values the fact that the Lebanese Government has condemned the launching of rockets by fundamentalist groups from its territory against Israel. We appreciate all efforts aimed at neutralizing the actions of radical groups, and we highlight the commitment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which have increased their control in the area.

Turning now to Syria, Chile welcomes the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) on humanitarian access, which we hope will help alleviate the suffering of millions of Syrians and result in the delivery of more effective, efficient and timely assistance in keeping with humanitarian principles. We emphasize the binding nature of the resolution, as well as the fact that it complements resolution 2139 (2014) and the presidential statement of 2 October 2013 (S/PRST/2013/15).

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Staffan de Mistura as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, whose mission contributes to the quest for a peaceful solution to the conflict based on dialogue and reconciliation. The Government of Chile wishes him every success in that task and offers him its strong support in building more appropriate channels for dialogue.

Finally, I would like to consider Iraq. Chile expresses its deep concern for the grave humanitarian and security situation in Iraq resulting from the military advance of terrorist groups, especially the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which has resulted in a high number of civilian victims and over 1 million displaced persons. We are alarmed by the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in the region.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing and mediation efforts. I also thank the representatives of Palestine and Israel for their statements.

Today's debate comes at a particularly sensitive time for the consideration of the situation in the Middle East, in particular in Gaza, where violence has reached an unacceptable level. Chad follows with great concern and consternation the spike of violence hitherto unseen in Gaza, which since 8 July has been subjected to a full-scale Israeli assault, leading to more than 600 deaths; more than 350 wounded, the majority of whom are civilians, including women, children and the elderly; and more than 100,000 displaced persons, all of which has been compounded by the destruction of civilian infrastructure — housing, hospitals, clinics and schools.

Chad vociferously condemns the massacre of Shujaiya, a city where many civilian lives were lost on the Palestinian side as a result of the Israeli

bombardment. We also condemn any attacks targeting innocent civilians or civilian infrastructure. We are all aware that such acts of violence against civilians are serious violations of the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and could constitute war crimes. The perpetrators of such crimes and atrocities should be held to account. The principle of payback and justice cannot be used as a pretext.

Chad deplores the growing number of civilian casualties and regrets the approving silence or impotence of the international community and the resulting failure to put an end to the escalation of violence in Gaza. Israel's legitimate right to self-defence cannot justify such a high number of civilian casualties. The right to self-defence is defined with respect to the threat and to the right to life and security of innocent civilians. In that regard, Israel has the obligation to act in line with international humanitarian law and to protect the lives of the civilian population.

We call upon Israel to immediately halt its air raids and ground offensive, which have already claimed far too many lives and caused destruction and material damage. Along the same lines, we call upon the Palestinians to halt attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip, particularly through rocket fire. We call upon the international community to act with solidarity to provide emergency humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza and to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The 2 million people in the Gaza Strip, under a blockade since 2007, are cut off from the rest of the world, stripped of the minimum of necessities and subjected to periodic collective punishment. They are experiencing a tragedy that is an affront to the human conscience. The Security Council, as the body exclusively responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, has an obligation to persuade Israel to put an end to its attacks against civilians and to its disproportionate offensive.

Chad supports all the good offices of the international community, including those of the Secretary-General and the Egyptian initiative, supported by the League of Arab States, to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a resumption of peace talks. In that regard, it is of utmost importance to take on board the concerns of all parties so as to find a fair, comprehensive and definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the well-known parameters, chiefly, the two-State

solution, living side by side in peace and security with the pre-1967 borders.

The Middle East region is increasingly fragile. The wars in Iraq and Syria, the collapse of security in Yemen and the ongoing fragility of Lebanon are all worrisome signs that call attention to genuine and imminent threats looming over the Middle East and undermining peace and security, which are increasingly called into question. The international community should make tireless efforts and be firm in its policy so as to extinguish the fires in the various areas of the region and thereby ensure that they do not spread further to threaten international peace and security on a yet broader scale.

Mr. Baublys (Lithuania): Lithuania thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to protect civilians and reach a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza. Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later on.

Our eyes are riveted upon Gaza. We condemn the loss of hundreds of civilian lives, many of them children, and the 100,000 people displaced. The magnitude of the humanitarian crisis is breathtaking. This is the moment for the international community, regional Powers and the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to respond to the cry of civilians for peace. Violence has no place in addressing the ongoing situation. The actions of Hamas and military groups in Gaza — including the firing of rockets into Israel, developing rockets and tunnels, using civilians as human shields — cannot be tolerated. We recognize Israel's legitimate right to defend itself. Israel must act in a proportionate manner, in line with international humanitarian law, to ensure the protection of civilians.

Lithuania is alarmed by the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We condemn the shelling of a third hospital. The humanitarian situation requires urgent attention. Humanitarian causes should be respected and immediate access for humanitarian assistance must be unconditionally allowed. All parties are obligated to protect schools and hospitals, respect their civilian character, and ensure safe passage for medical personnel and ambulances. We sincerely appreciate the tireless work and efforts of doctors, paramedics, United Nations personnel, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations in saving human lives in Gaza.

We strongly support the ongoing diplomatic efforts of the Secretary-General, together with regional Powers — including Egypt, Turkey, Qatar and the League of Arab States — to convince Hamas and other militant groups to cease all rocket attacks and agree on a complete, immediate ceasefire. We hope that it will lead to a genuine dialogue with Israel and Palestine. The tragic escalation of hostilities once again confirms the unsustainable nature of the status quo and the need for a comprehensive solution with regard to the situation in Gaza, Palestine and the entire region.

Lithuania reiterates that a two-State solution remains the only way to achieve a lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. My country is willing to work with the United States and other partners on an initiative to relaunch peace negotiations.

The Middle East is gripped by bouts of extreme violence. There is no breakthrough in sight for Syria. The shocking levels of human suffering today, we know, will pale against those of tomorrow. We welcome resolution 2165 (2014), which we hope will facilitate the delivery of aid to all Syrians in need. In case of non-compliance with resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) by any Syrian party, the Council has the responsibility to act by taking measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations and referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. The ultimate goal remains a political solution to the conflict in Syria and we welcome the appointment of the new United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Syria, Staffan de Mistura.

The Syrian crisis has become a regional crisis with potential international security threats. A political settlement in Syria could play a decisive role in fighting the growing terrorism and insurgency in and around regional flashpoints, mainly Iraq. Terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) already control a large swathe of the Middle East, a chunk of Iraq, and oil wells in Syria. They undermine the stability, unity and territorial integrity of States. ISIS fuels the worst kind of extremism. Mosul is just the latest example.

The systematic discrimination, assassination and killing of Shia, Christians, Turkmen, Shabaks, Yazidis and other religious and ethnic groups by ISIS are a serious cause of concern. The grievances of religious and ethnic groups against the central Iraqi Government are one of the reasons behind the dramatic rise of insurgency. We call on all Iraqis to pursue an inclusive

national dialogue. We urge all actors in the region to continue contributing to the stabilization of the political and security situation in the country.

A failure to implement resolution 1701 (2006) may have further dramatic political, security and humanitarian consequences for Lebanon. By increasing its presence in the south of the country, the Lebanese Armed Forces will contribute to regional peace and security. We commend the Lebanese Government for keeping Lebanon's doors open to refugees, for upholding the Baabda Declaration and for pursuing the national dialogue. We urge the Lebanese Parliament to elect a new President as soon as possible. Lebanon needs the political support and assistance of the international community.

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

I want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, especially on the conflict related to Gaza. I also wish to thank Ambassador Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine, and the representative of Israel to the United Nations, David Roet, for their respective statements.

The current trend regarding the security situation in the Middle East, from Gaza to Iraq through Syria and Yemen, is concerning. The level of human loss and destruction in the region as a result of recurring violence is unspeakable. In just two weeks of the crisis in Gaza, more than 600 lives have been lost and more than 3,700 people wounded, in addition to over 100,000 people displaced. In this regard, we also strongly condemn the indiscriminate rocket fire by Hamas into Israel and call for an immediate end to these attacks. We recognize the right of Israel to self-defence, as no country on Earth would accept daily rocket attacks on its cities and its people.

Nonetheless, we are deeply disturbed by the level of civilian victims of this war, including an increasing number of children, as demonstrated by the recent fighting in Shujaiya. We call for the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. Above all, the parties to this conflict must heed the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities based on a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement, as expressed last Sunday by the Council. Rwanda further supports the proposed ceasefire to be brokered by Egypt, which would give a

chance for a long-term political and economic solution for Gaza.

We further believe that the proposal put forward in the Council to establish a viable verification and monitoring mission, which would ensure the implementation of any ceasefire agreement, should be supported by the concerned parties and stakeholders. There is no doubt that our collective failure to advance a political solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue to lead to cyclical violence in the Middle East.

We welcome the visit to the region of the Secretary-General and the United States Secretary of State, who emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire as well as the importance of taking concrete action in addressing the underlying causes of this crisis. Indeed, only a political solution based on a two-State solution with two peoples living side by side in peace and security will provide a sustainable settlement to the six-decade conflict.

For the past three years now, the conflict in Syria has been destroying a people, with massive violations of human rights and a worsening humanitarian situation. Over 150,000 have died and more than 10 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. It is the responsibility of the Syrian parties, supported by those countries that have influence on them, to end that war.

In that regard, Rwanda welcomes the appointment of the new United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We are convinced that he will use his experience to jump-start the Geneva II peace process, with the support of all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate in Syria, mainly due to the continued hostilities, but also to the failure of the parties to implement resolution 2139 (2014). Rwanda welcomed the unanimous adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), which authorized United Nations humanitarian agencies to use four additional border crossings. We hope that the new resolution will enable humanitarian actors to assist up to 2 million hard-to-reach people. However, Rwanda believes that the Council should be vigilant as well as fully prepared to take concrete measures under the Charter of the United Nations in the event of non-compliance with both humanitarian resolutions in Syria.

On a more positive note, Rwanda commends Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the joint

mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, together with her team, for their tremendous achievements in the elimination and destruction of all declared chemical weapons of the Syrian Government, as requested by resolution 2118 (2013).

Although we hope that no chemical material was left behind, we cannot forget that, last August, hundreds of innocent people, including women and children, lost their lives following horrendous suffering. Now more than ever, the perpetrators must be held accountable.

In conclusion, Rwanda expresses its firm belief that only an inclusive moderate and responsible approach will restore stability in the Middle East and achieve permanent peace in the region. It is therefore our collective responsibility to support the Secretary-General and other stakeholders in their tireless efforts to work for a peaceful resolution of conflicts throughout the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Jordan has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan): I want to respond to the inquiry by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and to assure him that Jordan will be discussing with Council members proposals by the League of Arab States to end the conflict and the attack on the Palestinian people in Gaza. The League has given the mandate to Jordan to do so, as well as the discretion on when to present the proposals. The goal should be to ensure effective action and fruitful efforts on the ground to end the conflict. It is in that context that we will confer with Council members and circulate a draft document later today for members' views. I thank Ambassador Churkin for his concern and attention to the matter.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you and your team, for your leadership of the Security Council this month. I would also like to commend the members of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation for a job well done during their presidency last month. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

While the sun was setting and many Palestinians were readying themselves for prayers and breaking their fast, Israeli jetfighters and frigates and tanks broke the peacefulness and pounded the Gaza Strip. Over the past 15 days, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed, more than 3,600 injured and more than 100,000 displaced. Sixty-four mosques, eight medical centres and hundreds of houses have been destroyed. Apparently, that is how Israel chooses life for the Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Time and again, we have heard about the so-called right to self-defence. Based on the figures I have just mentioned, it looks like self-help. Some might ask: Who will defend the helpless in Gaza?

The territory of the State of Palestine is being devastated by the continuing occupation and, more particularly, by the growing illegal settlement activity. Jerusalem is being deprived of its inclusiveness and diversity.

The civilians in the West Bank are being subjected to systematic security searches, massive arrest, the illegal demolition of homes and collective punishment, in blatant violation of Israel's obligations under international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law.

How many mothers should be bereaved and how many more youngsters should be assassinated? How much longer should the Gaza Strip and its civilian population be punished by the imposed blockade, the rainfall of shelling and the repetitive punitive Israeli military strikes in order for the Council to condemn and put an end to those barbaric actions?

The atrocities on the ground should serve to summon the political will in all Council members to adopt a draft resolution to immediately end the violence against civilians. In that context, Lebanon hopes that the efforts led by Egypt and supported by the Secretary-General and other officials in the region or visiting the

region will yield the much needed ceasefire that ends the suffering of thousands of civilians.

We also support the call by President Mahmoud Abbas to ensure international protection for the people and territory of the State of Palestine. We agree with the Secretary-General on the need to address the root causes of the conflict. In that regard, we think that the international community should finally translate its commitment to the peace process into action, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the integral provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), my Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of said resolution. Today, and in light of the latest developments in the south of Lebanon, my Government stands firm against any attempt to destabilize the situation. Need I recall that the Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly rejected the rockets launched by outlaw individuals and marginal groups? Need I recall that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) arrested their perpetrators? Need I also recall that the LAF and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) continue to work relentlessly to maintain stability?

Notwithstanding these endeavours, Israel launched more than 100 shells into the south of Lebanon, undermining the joint efforts of the LAF and UNIFIL and endangering their safety. We therefore lodged a complaint, asking the Security Council to condemn in the strongest term the Israeli bombardments, which constitute a blatant breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and a clear violation of the sovereignty of my country. Furthermore, more needs to be done to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Indeed, Israel should immediately end its occupation of the northern part of Al-Ghajar, the Sheba'a Farms and the Kfar Shouba hills. Israel should end its almost daily violation of Lebanon's airspace, and Israel should refrain from any unilateral action that could lead to escalation.

Ross Mountain, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Lebanon, has said:

“When you have 50,000 or 100,000 refugees in the country, it is a refugee emergency. When you have a quarter of the population of the country now arising and one-third estimated by the end of this year ... it is a national calamity.”

Moreover, my country cannot cope alone with this situation, particularly since the host communities have reached their breaking point. The international community should do more through the provision of direct assistance to the Government agencies and by fulfilling the pledges made at the donors conference. It is alarming that only 29 per cent of the response plan for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon has been funded.

Furthermore, burden-sharing is a principle that we collectively need to uphold, and we reiterate our call for the intensification of efforts to increase the number of refugees included in resettlement programmes. Most importantly, serious efforts should be made to widen the humanitarian space to accommodate Syrian refugees in safe zones in Syria or in camps along the border. In this context, my Government will remain engaged with the international community to ensure a well-calibrated approach to the issue of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, based on the principles of international law and the need to maintain stability in the country.

We commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 2165 (2014) and welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We hope that similar consensus will emerge around a much-needed mission of the Security Council to the neighbouring countries hosting refugees from Syria. Said mission would allow a first-hand account of the dire situation of those refugees and their host community, and highlight the urgent need to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Maybe during that mission, the members of this body will meet Ahmad, a 10-year-old boy who fled Syria to Lebanon in 2013. Ahmad dreams of building a time machine that would take him to a time when there will be a solution to the conflict and peace in his country — a time that will allow him and many other Syrian children to go back to their homes and schools and regain their lost childhood. It is time to heed the call of Ahmad and millions of Syrian people.

The President: I wish to remind speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, since many speakers remain on the list for this meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Khalil (Egypt): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. We trust that you, Sir, will steer the Council in addressing this very serious situation. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. We express our support for his efforts in support of our

initiative to achieve an immediate ceasefire and for the three points that he mentioned, namely, stopping the fighting, starting dialogue and addressing the root causes. I would like to welcome the presence earlier today of Minister Asselborn. We pay tribute to his commitment and courage.

In our most recent open debate on the Middle East (see S/PV.7164), we assessed the situation following nine months of unfruitful negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The negotiations failed because Israel, the occupying Power, refused to abide by the agreed rules of the game. It continued to build illegal settlements and refused to release the last batch of pre-Oslo Palestinian prisoners. It called off the talks when the Palestinian Government had the audacity to respond to those illegal measures by exercising its fully legitimate right under international law to adhere to a number of human rights conventions.

We all concluded that the situation was not sustainable. We predicted that it could explode at any time. Unfortunately, our forecast was all too accurate. It took less than three months for the entire situation to explode. The collapse of the peace talks and, since then, the deplorable kidnapping and killing of teenagers from both sides, the exaggerated retaliatory measures of Israel, the escalation of the racist price-tag attacks against Arabs, Muslims and Christians alike, the continuous provocation and attempts to change the status quo with regard to the Holy Mosque in Jerusalem, the launching of rockets and projectiles towards Israel and the many other events that we have witnessed during the past three months, leading to the current war being waged on Gaza, are all painful symptoms of a chronic and deadly disease called occupation. That has led to the current tragic cycle of violence and will continue to give rise to similar tragedies until it is eradicated.

No matter how strong Israel's denial, the occupation remains the principal cause of the instability for both Israelis and Palestinians. The solution is simple. Once there is no occupation, there will be no violence from either side. Once there are two States living side by side within the defined and recognized borders of 4 June 1967, peace will be achieved. How many more lives must be lost and how many more children, women and men must be killed, maimed or psychologically destroyed for life before Israel recognizes that occupation is not sustainable? How many times has it tried the same policies and how many times has it seen the same results? Instead of achieving the security of its

citizens, Israel still feels threatened despite its military might, which exceeds the military capabilities of all its neighbours combined.

Egypt therefore commends the recent warnings issued by more than a dozen European countries about the possible repercussions of investment in entities involved in settlement activities. We believe that such moves, in addition to the steps taken by civil society to divest from activities directly linked to the occupation or to grave breaches of international law, such as the decision taken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to divest from a British company linked to the Israeli prison system, can contribute to convincing Israel that occupation has a price.

Egypt condemns the indiscriminate killing of civilians in Gaza. The horrible scenes of death and destruction in Shujaiya and the fatally wounded bodies of the four innocent boys who were playing soccer in an open area on a beach two days before that call into serious question the logic of the Israeli army. It is not credible to pretend that children were mistakenly identified as terrorists.

More than 600 Palestinians have been killed. At least 20 per cent of them were children, and the death count is rising. We condemn the disproportionate use of force. The *Torah* mandates an eye for an eye; it never called for taking 100 eyes for only 1.

Egypt has spared no effort to help in stopping the atrocities in Gaza. We have launched the only serious ceasefire initiative aimed at stopping the hostilities and negotiating the terms of a sustainable solution that can bring the Palestinians and the Israelis back to the negotiating table. The clear and broad support for the initiative expressed by the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council reflects the fact that the proposed approach might be the only opportunity available to stop the fighting and restore normal life for the civilian population in Gaza.

We call on all those who have not accepted the initiative to reconsider their positions. Today the Secretary-General was in Egypt. United States Secretary of State John Kerry was also in Cairo. We hope that our common efforts will result in an immediate ceasefire followed by negotiations to address the root causes of the ever-repeating, never-ending conflict, first and foremost by ending the illegal blockade imposed on Gaza and opening the crossings administered by the occupying Power.

Meanwhile, we support in full the request by the Palestinian President to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, which was endorsed by the League of Arab States. We look forward to concrete and creative steps on the part of the Secretary-General and the Security Council to deliver the much-needed protection for the Palestinians.

I would like to end my statement by reading out excerpts from articles written by an independent Israeli journalist, Noam Sheizaf on 10 July, before the ground campaign against Gaza started. He wrote,

“Even today, when rockets are exploding above the city I love most in the world, even when we rush into ... a makeshift bomb shelter, even now, I oppose this military operation wholeheartedly. The sight of the [Israeli Air Force’s] attack helicopters ... going south ... does not fill me with pride or gratitude — it horrifies and depresses me;

“[I]f I had to explain the whole thing briefly, I would use the following metaphor: we have built two giant prisons — ‘West Bank Prison’ and ‘Gaza Prison’. The West Bank Prison is similar to a minimum security facility, where prisoners get to run their own affairs as long as they behave;

“Gaza, on the other hand, is a maximum security facility. It is difficult to visit and impossible to leave;

“I believe the prisoners will never love those who have locked them up, but there is a good chance that their children might be able to forgive — if for no other reason than a desire to move on with their lives;

“Hold your fire. Tear down the prison walls. Set the prisoners free.”

I hope Israel will listen to that voice of reason. I hope one day the Israelis will be convinced that occupation will never bring security; on the contrary, it will only bring instability, death and war crimes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia, hoping that he will be a little generous with us.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia): I hope you will be equally generous, Mr. President, with the 57 countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that I represent here today.

(spoke in Arabic)

Allow me, at the outset, to express my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow me also to thank you, Sir, for your wise leadership of the Council, which is reflected first and foremost in three meetings recently held by the Security Council to consider the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza (see S/PV.7220, S/PV.7216 and S/PV.7204). It is also my pleasure to speak to the Security Council on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

We heard from the Permanent Representative of Israel a long series of unfounded claims and flimsy pretexts, as well as dramatic expressions intended to give the impression that Israel was the aggrieved party in the current battles, or indeed in years past. Do not be fooled, Sir.

We should not be fooled when Israel says that it defends itself against missile attacks launched by Palestinians against it. The fact of the matter is that Israel has a defence system against missiles that has so far effectively destroyed most of the rockets launched against the country. What Israel is doing is not self-defence, it is a widespread attack replete with war crimes. Do not be fooled, Sir.

We must not be fooled when Israel says that Palestinian attacks threaten its security and that of its citizens. The fact of the matter is that the number of victims of those rockets in Israel throughout the years of occupation does not rise to the level of the number of those killed in traffic accidents in Israel in just one year — indeed, even in one month or in a single city. Israel is using those attacks as a pretext for a genocidal war against the Palestinian people. Do not be fooled, Mr. President.

We should not be fooled when Israel says that no Government in the world would stand idly by as its cities, villages and citizens were threatened. The fact of the matter is that no other Government in the world practices what Israel practices, namely, the occupation of the land of another State, the repression of that State’s people, laying siege to those people and starving them in an attempt to make them bend to its will. Do not be fooled, Mr. President.

We should not be fooled when Israel says that it accepts peace initiatives and ceasefires, while the other

party rejects them. The fact of the matter is that Israel is the party that withdrew from peace negotiations. It was Israel that reneged on its commitments by refusing to release the last tranche of Palestinian detainees. It was Israel that re-arrested and re-detained those already released in prisoner-exchange agreements, in flagrant violation of those agreements. It is Israel that has unrelentingly persisted in building occupation settlements on Palestinian land.

It is Israel that desecrates Islamic and Christian holy sites, day in and day out. It is Israel that prevents and denies the faithful access to such sites during the holy month of Ramadan. It is Israel that continues to besiege the Palestinian people in Gaza by land, sea and air.

Mr. President, did you not hear Prime Minister Netanyahu fully reject any Palestinian sovereignty under any agreement? Did you not hear, Mr. President, a member of Mr. Netanyahu's ruling Likud party — Knesset Vice-President Moshe Feiglin — call for ethnic cleansing in Gaza and for the expulsion of all Palestinians therefrom, or indeed Knesset member Ayelet Shaked, of the HaBayit HaYehudi party, call for the massacre of all Palestinian mothers because they only gave birth to snakes?

Finally, Mr. President, do not be fooled if Israel says that the starting point of the events we are witnessing today is the kidnapping of three Israeli settlers from the West Bank. The fact is that the starting point is the very presence of settlers on occupied Palestinian land. The starting point is the occupation itself and its perpetuation. The starting point is the unjust siege of Gaza and the fact that it has been transformed into a large open-air prison for Palestinians. That led to the major deterioration in humanitarian conditions, in violation of resolution 1860 (2009).

The end point can be reached only by putting an end to the occupation and to the settlements, by lifting the siege on Gaza, by guaranteeing the protection of the Palestinian people and by giving them an opportunity to determine their own future and live in peace and security in accordance with international law and the initiative put forward by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and adopted by Arab States, which became the Arab Peace Initiative supported by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The Palestinian people have appealed to the Security Council three times this month to seek its

protection and to call on it to assume its responsibility to end the aggression and the killing. The first time was before the martyrdom of the four Bakr children on the beach of Gaza. They were killed in cold blood as they exercised their right to childhood and soccer. The second time was before their 80-year-old grandmother and a 5-month-old infant were killed under the rubble caused by an Israeli raid. The third time was following the Israeli massacre in Shujaiya, where dozens of Palestinian civilians were martyred. This is now the fourth time that the Palestinian people appeal to the Security Council since the Israeli war machine promised to intensify its aggression and expand its criminal operations in Gaza — after the killing of 25 people under the rubble of their homes in Khan Younis, including 24 members of one family; the killing of 10 members of the Siyam family in Rafah, including four children and a nine-month old; as well as the killing of a mother and her four children.

How many tragedies must this aggrieved people bear as it seeks the Council's protection and an end to the aggression? The death toll has reached and exceeded 600 martyrs. There are more than 4,000 wounded, most of whom are children, civilians and women. More than 100 Palestinians have been made homeless. The Israeli aggression has gone beyond destroying the homes of the inhabitants of Gaza and attacking hospitals — indeed, even centres for the handicapped — let alone the barbaric aggression against mosques. When will the Security Council intervene? Where and when will the Council exercise its role in protecting international peace and security? Has it decided to shirk that responsibility? Will its role now merely be to document and provide testimonials and statements to the press in support of whatever agreement the different parties reach? As has been said, what is the point of the Security Council if it does not take action?

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation renews its appeal to the international community, in particular to the Security Council, given the urgent need, in accordance with its responsibilities, to swiftly take a firm position to put an immediate end to the Israeli aggression and violence and an end to the occupation and the violations of international law. The Security Council must ensure accountability for all the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Security Council must enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate rights and aspirations, as provided for in United Nations resolutions.

The tragedy of the Syrian people continues as they struggle to achieve their aspirations of freedom and dignity in the face of a stubborn authority that refuses to face the facts and is living in illusions. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of the new international envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and his deputy, Mr. Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy. We wish them success and express the hope that they will begin where their predecessors left off, namely, with the need to work to implement the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), based on the establishment of a transitional authority with broad executive powers to undertake a transition to a new dawn in Syria and on the establishment of a modern State built on justice and equality.

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

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Today is a sad day. The killings in Gaza during the past 15 days have been taking place under the media spotlight. The collective punishment of the citizens of Gaza is being recorded live. Innocent, non-combatant and unarmed Palestinian men, women and children are being mowed down. One quarter of those killed are children, and three quarters civilians. Death is coming to them from the sky, from the water and from land. Their chastisement is complete and definitive. Nobody can help them.

The world street is appalled and angry. It cannot believe that neither the Security Council, nor the most powerful nations on Earth nor influential regional organizations cannot stop the carnage in Gaza.

It is not really war, because one side is mighty and well-armed and the other side is ill-equipped and using some projectiles. The Palestinians, who do not have a standing army, are being pummeled by one of the most modern and sophisticated military machines. There is no proportionality. The asymmetry could not be more glaring. And yet, military muscle offers no solution. All sides must overcome their existential fears and build trust. The parties must cease fire and move to the negotiating chambers.

We understand the complexity of the situation and the political and strategic rebalancing involved. And yet, the human mind cannot reconcile itself to the continuation of killings that could be stopped. The Council has acted swiftly, and also decisively, from time to time on Syria, Libya, Yemen, the Central African Republic, Mali and Ukraine. People all around the

world wonder why on Gaza it has been able to produce only a press statement or elements for the press.

The people of Gaza are in an open prison in the best of circumstances. Now they are getting killed in their prison. Violence begets violence, and peace engenders peace. The relentless bloodshed must be stopped and peace talks initiated. Both sides should cease fire and give diplomatic efforts a chance to succeed. No initiative for a ceasefire should be spurned, because a cessation of hostilities will save lives instantly, although the recent trauma will haunt the region for years. Missiles and rockets should go silent. Let people start talking and listening to each other. This spiral must be arrested.

Pakistan condemns the Israeli aggression. People in Pakistan have expressed their solidarity with the entrapped and embattled people of Gaza through protests, rallies and resolutions. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that Israeli atrocities amount to genocide and has demanded that the world stop that aggression. President Barack Obama has said, "we do not want to see any more civilians killed". The international diplomacy initiated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Secretary of State John Kerry and the Egyptian leadership must be intensified. One of the reasons for the recent escalation of violence is the collapse of the peace process. We endorse the Secretary-General's message to Israelis and Palestinians: stop fighting, start talking and take on the root causes of the conflict.

As we work for an end to the hostilities, efforts must also be made to revive the peace talks. The Middle East cannot have enduring peace without a two-State solution. An independent, viable and geographically contiguous Palestinian State, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side with Israel, is the only way to guarantee peace and stability in the region.

We call on the Security Council to act by adopting a resolution that would call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, halt Israeli air, ground and naval offensives, and remove Israeli forces from Gaza. The Security Council should play its role in ending the blockade of Gaza and opening its border and in the release of Palestinian prisoners. As diplomatic efforts continue, we call for humanitarian pauses to help those who are badly wounded and those stranded in temporary shelters. The children and women of Gaza are crying for help. The Council must listen to their wails and heed their cries.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the improvement. I hope that the representative of Morocco will also be a little generous.

I now call on the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on his visit to the Middle East, as well as for his efforts towards a ceasefire in Gaza. We wish him all the best.

The Security Council is meeting today at a time when the Middle East has witnessed grave developments and setbacks that have caused an unprecedented level of deterioration in the tragic situation in the region. For years now, the unjustified and unacceptable escalation by Israel targeting unarmed civilians in Gaza has led only to more hatred and more violence, with grave consequences that undermine all of the efforts that have been made so far to push the peace process forward.

The Kingdom of Morocco denounces and deplors this Israeli military escalation against the Palestinian people, which violates all international conventions. We call on the international community to fully shoulder its responsibilities and to urgently intervene to bring about an immediate cessation of this aggression targeting unarmed civilians; protect the Palestinian people and preserve their rights; and call on Israel to respect international legitimacy.

Hundreds of victims have fallen since the beginning of the aggression, including many children, women and elderly persons. Their homes were demolished over their heads, their families dispersed and their property destroyed. This represents a grave deterioration of the already terrible humanitarian situation, caused by the premeditated actions carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people.

His Highness King Mohammed VI has provided urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and to the victims of Israeli aggression. They will receive medical assistance in Moroccan hospitals. His Majesty, as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, who is keenly following the situation in Palestine, spoke with His Excellency the President of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen, in order to follow up the unprecedented situation resulting from the indiscriminate Israeli aggression against the unarmed Palestinian people. His Royal Majesty expressed his sincere condolences to the families of Palestinian

martyrs and his sympathy with the wounded. He denounced once again the premeditated Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people, their land and their property, and expressed the full solidarity of Morocco with those people.

The continuing military operations will lead only to further bloodshed among innocents. It will complicate the situation and will lead to more violence and enmity. We therefore call for an immediate end to the aggression against Gaza. Morocco supports all of the efforts under way to bring about an immediate ceasefire, which are being undertaken by a number of Arab and other countries as well as the Secretary-General.

We support the Secretary-General's call on both parties to immediately cease fire. We also urge the international community to fully shoulder its responsibilities and provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people to overcome this crisis and provide all forms of assistance and protection in order to enable the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination.

The only way to resolve the Palestinian question is not by war or bloodshed or the killing of innocent civilians. It is through a return to negotiations towards a two-State solution, where two peoples can live side by side in peace and security. We will remain fully supportive of the peace negotiations, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution, with a State of Palestine within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I will make a short statement here; the full text will be circulated.

As we have heard, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains grim, perpetuated by the disproportionate use of force and aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, with complete disregard for the lives of civilians. Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms the acts of aggression and the ground invasion launched by the occupying Power, and we demand the immediate cessation of these illegal acts.

Since the start of the military airstrikes by Israel on 8 July 2014, followed by the ground invasion, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed and over 3,500 injured. Over 80,000 Palestinians have been displaced, stretching the capacity of the United Nations Relief

and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated earlier that 80 per cent of the Palestinians killed were civilians.

This includes the brutal killings of four Palestinian boys last week who were doing what kids do, playing by the beach, and who posed no threat whatsoever to Israel. Over the weekend, a 6-year-old girl was badly injured when eight of her family members were killed by Israeli forces in their own home. Four of them were children, including a seven-month-old baby. We strongly deplore the senseless loss of innocent lives in the conflict, and we take this opportunity to convey our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

The grotesquely disproportionate nature of the Israeli-Palestinian situation means that Israel's claim that its action was based on self-defence is simply fallacious. Israel's assertion that the Palestinians were using civilians as human shields is similarly perverse. As Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, civilians there cannot but be affected when faced with a barrage of bombardments and military aggression by Israel. These are not human shields; they are simply civilians, in their own homes, going about their daily lives. Israeli attacks on and bombardments of civilians' homes, hospitals and schools constitute a gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention that amount to war crimes.

Malaysia urges the international community, especially the Security Council, to act swiftly and decisively to demand that Israel cease its disproportionate and atrocious aggression against Palestine. It is imperative that both sides immediately restore calm to avoid greater destruction and further loss of life, especially among the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the call by the Security Council for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. We urge all parties to commit themselves to that end.

As a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, we participated in a fact-finding mission to Amman and Cairo last month. We heard disturbing testimony from a number of witnesses, non-governmental organizations, Palestinian Government officials and United Nations agencies operating in Palestinian territory and in the occupied

Syrian Golan regarding human rights and humanitarian violations perpetrated by the occupying Power. It pains us to see that all the warning signs that went unheeded are being manifested in the violence we see today.

With complete disregard for the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, settlement expansion throughout Israel's occupied territories has continued at an alarming pace and on an alarming scale, with new policies and procedures allowing for the confiscation of Palestinian land and property. My delegation notes that settler violence has become a natural consequence of those illegal sites, especially the destruction of Palestinian property, agriculture and livestock with impunity, in the absence of protection by the occupying Power.

To those who would condone Israel's action in flagrant violation of the law, especially international humanitarian law, and who have allowed Israel to escape with impunity for the past six decades, I ask: Where is their conscience? For far too long, the Council has been quiet and paralysed in the face of aggression, expansion and the lack of accountability on the part of the occupying Power. The silence is deafening. The Security Council should redeem itself and uphold the responsibilities entrusted to it with respect to Israel's failure to implement the numerous resolutions before it and should take immediate measures to address that great injustice.

As the occupying Power, Israel is responsible for protecting the people under its occupation. Clearly, Israel has failed to do so for the past six decades. Regrettably, the United Nations remains paralysed. Its key members, who are in a position and have the power to act to rectify the situation, choose self-interest rather than humanity and the rule of law, turning a blind eye on Israeli aggression. That situation simply cannot be allowed to continue in perpetuity. In that regard, Malaysia supports the call by the State of Palestine to place Palestine under the international protection system of the United Nations. We also reiterate the call to convene a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to address Israel's continued noncompliance with the provisions of that instrument.

In conclusion, Israel's ruthless military attacks on civilians are unwarranted and are a crime against humanity. Malaysia therefore calls on the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and on the

international community to take immediate action to halt Israel's atrocities against the Palestinian people of Gaza and to work to bring calm to Israel and Palestine.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. I would like to draw delegations' attention to the written statement that is being distributed and to the conclusions on the Middle East peace process that the European Union Foreign Affairs Council adopted just a few hours ago. In the interests of time, I will deliver an abridged version of my statement.

The European Union is extremely concerned at the continued escalation of violence in Gaza and calls for an immediate cessation of the hostilities, based on a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement. We welcome ongoing efforts to that end by regional partners, in particular by Egypt, and reiterate our readiness to provide the necessary support.

We strongly condemn the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip, which directly harm civilians. Those are criminal and unjustifiable acts. We call on Hamas to immediately put an end to those acts and to renounce violence. All terrorist groups in Gaza must disarm. We strongly condemn calls on the civilian population of Gaza to provide themselves as human shields.

We condemn the loss of hundreds of civilian lives, among them many women and children. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, we underline that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. The European Union stresses the need to protect civilians at all times. We are particularly appalled by the human cost of the Israeli military operation in Shujaiya, and are deeply concerned at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. All sides must meet their obligations and immediately allow safe and full humanitarian access in Gaza for the urgent distribution of assistance. We call on all sides to implement an immediate ceasefire in good faith.

The tragic escalation of hostilities confirms again the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. While fully recognizing

Israel's legitimate security needs, the European Union underlines that the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza must be addressed. We reiterate our call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

We stand ready, including through the reactivation of our European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah crossing point, if conditions allow, to contribute to a comprehensive and sustainable solution that meets the legitimate security, economic and humanitarian needs of Israelis and Palestinians.

Recent events in the broader Middle East pose serious threats to the European Union and its immediate neighbours. We reiterate our fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region. The European Union has fully supported United States-led peace efforts. We urge the parties to resume meaningful negotiations with the aim of achieving a comprehensive peace agreement based on a two-State solution. Clear parameters are key elements for a successful outcome. We are willing to work with the United States and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following parameters.

First, there must be an agreement on the borders of the two States based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The European Union will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties.

Secondly, there must be security arrangements that, for the Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over, and which, for the Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including new and vital threats in the region.

Thirdly, there must be a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question.

Fourthly, the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem must be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

We call on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E-1, and to put an end to

settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions — including of European Union-funded projects — to evictions and forced transfers and to increasing tensions and challenges to the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. A fundamental change of policy on those negative developments is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two-State solution.

The European Union has welcomed the appointment of a Palestinian Government of independent personalities and the declaration by President Abbas that the new Government is committed to the Quartet principles. Our engagement with the new Palestinian Government is based on its continued adherence, in words and actions, to those policies and commitments. The Palestinian Government needs to take charge of Gaza and end the internal division. We call on it to work towards genuine democratic elections for all Palestinians. We reiterate our call on the Palestinian leadership to use its United Nations status constructively and not to undertake steps that would lead farther away from a negotiated solution.

The further development of our relations with both Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-State solution. We reiterate our offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a special privileged partnership with the European Union in the event of a final peace agreement.

The human catastrophe is now proliferating to reach Syria's neighbours, most dramatically Iraq, which are facing an extremely difficult situation. The European Union welcomes their efforts to cope with the growing crisis and will continue to support them.

There can only be a political solution to the conflict in Syria. We support efforts to resume an inclusive political dialogue among all Syrians on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). Stronger international efforts, including among regional countries, will be of crucial importance.

We fully support Mr. de Mistura and Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Ramzy's difficult and urgent mission, as well as the priorities set out by the Secretary-General in his speech "Crisis in Syria: Civil War, Global Threat", of 20 June, at the Asia Society in New York.

The European Union welcomes the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014). We note the binding nature of the obligations set out in the resolution, as well as the

Council's commitment to take further measures in the event of noncompliance.

We reaffirm the urgent need to hold accountable all those responsible for grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. We regret that the Council has so far not been able to effectively address that issue.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating situation in Iraq and strongly condemns the armed assault conducted by terrorist and other armed groups. We are particularly concerned about reports of grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by those groups. All those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

Military operations should respect human rights and international humanitarian law. All parties must facilitate unimpeded access for humanitarian workers.

We remain firmly committed to Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we insist on respect for the democratic process in the country. We welcome the appointment of a new Speaker of the Council of Representatives, and we call on all the political leaders to step up efforts towards the speedy formation of a new inclusive Government that will steer Iraq in a process of national reconciliation.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Diallo (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the able manner in which you have been directing the work of the Council. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive briefing. We welcome his intensive diplomatic efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire, as well as those by Special Coordinator Robert Serry, United States Secretary of State John Kerry and other regional leaders.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the excessive and disproportionate use of force during the Israeli onslaught in the occupied Gaza Strip, including in the district of Shujaiya, which has caused many deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women and children. The casualty figures we heard during the Secretary-General's briefing are truly appalling. The

Committee also condemns the indiscriminate rocket fire emanating from Gaza, which has resulted in two Israeli deaths and several injuries so far.

We are appalled by the disproportionate use of force by a trained and well-equipped army, which has resulted in the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties, estimated at 77 per cent of the total fatalities. On 16 July, the shelling of a Gaza beach where four innocent boys, ages 9 to 11 years old, were killed while playing football is an event emblematic of the type of senseless violence that has annihilated entire families and destroyed hundreds of homes.

The situation took a dramatic turn for the worse with the beginning of the Israeli ground invasion. The casualty numbers, the photos and the survivor stories from the Shujaiya neighbourhood, which was carpet-bombed by Israel, speak for themselves. An international investigation should be considered by the Human Rights Council to determine accountability for those heinous acts.

Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilian infrastructure, namely, hospitals, water and sewage systems, as well as on mosques, are equally appalling. Thousands of homes have been destroyed or severely damaged, displacing over 100,000 people. Up to half of the population is without a water supply today.

Those acts are direct violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which obligates the occupying Power to protect the civilian population under its occupation. Article 33 of the Convention states, “[n]o protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed” and “[c]ollective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited”.

The Israeli rhetoric that it no longer occupies Gaza after the 2005 withdrawal of illegal settlers and soldiers denies the reality, which is that Israel controls access through border crossings, airspace and waters, and Gaza is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Committee welcomes and fully supports the request by the State of Palestine to the Government of Switzerland to convene a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to address the continuing violations of its provisions by the occupying Power, Israel. It is the responsibility of the High Contracting Parties, under article 1 of the Convention, to “undertake to respect and to ensure

respect for the present Convention in all circumstances”. Moreover, and as has been stated before, the Committee will fully support the State of Palestine if it decides to sign and ratify the Rome Statute, in order to establish full accountability for the targeting, wounding and killing of all innocent civilians.

The Committee calls upon the international community to adopt concerted measures to halt all violations of international humanitarian law, including the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Only serious, resolute collective action by the international community will compel Israel to abide by its obligations as the occupying Power as defined under international humanitarian law.

In the meantime, the United Nations humanitarian agencies on the ground in Gaza have stretched their resources very thin, and were underfunded to begin with in the face of such military actions. Those organizations are struggling to respond to the massive humanitarian needs of more than 150,000 affected Gazans as a result of the attacks. We urge donors to respond generously to the latest emergency appeal for \$115 million launched by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The Committee welcomes the convening of the Security Council’s emergency consultations on Sunday, 20 July to consider the ongoing crisis. The Committee takes note of the remarks made to the press by the President of the Security Council, and calls for concrete follow-up action by the Council to stop the senseless violence and to impede any further escalation of this dangerous crisis. The Committee believes that only a comprehensive solution to the Gaza situation, in line with resolution 1860 (2009), can prevent the periodic flare-ups of violence. Such a solution should become a top priority for the Council.

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

Mr. Umemoto (Japan): I would like thank you, Sir, for convening today’s meeting, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. I am also grateful to Ambassador Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine, and Ambassador David Roet, Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel, for their statements.

The Japanese statement today touches upon two issues: first, on the Middle East peace process and, secondly, on the situation in Syria. For the sake of time,

however, I will read out only the first part, as the text will be distributed in the Chamber.

Japan is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence between the Gaza Strip and Israel, including the launch of an Israeli ground operation in Gaza, and the growing number of casualties. It is deplorable, that despite efforts by the international community, including the Egyptian proposal and the Security Council's demand for a ceasefire, violence continues and Palestinian militants have not accepted any international peace efforts. Both Israeli and Palestinian civilians face a serious security threat. We profoundly deplore the loss of so many lives among innocent civilians. The current vicious cycle of violence might also pose a great risk to regional peace and security.

Japan joins the Council and the Secretary-General in calling for de-escalation and an end to the violence. The international community must speak with one voice to urge both sides to exercise maximum restraint and calm the situation. In that regard, we would like to commend Egypt, the United Nations, the United States and others for their mediation efforts. Japan will play its part in such international efforts to restore a ceasefire. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by phone today and appealed to him to exercise maximum restraint and to make a courageous decision to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Japan's Parliamentary senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nobuo Kishi, has embarked on a trip to the region. Last weekend he had meetings with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shokry in Cairo. Senior Vice-Minister Kishi conveyed Japan's support for the important role played by Egypt, especially its proposal for a ceasefire and its willingness to work to calm the situation and achieve a lasting ceasefire in coordination with the international community. He will be continuing his Middle East tour and will travel to Jordan, Israel, Palestine and Turkey starting today.

Japan will also continue to help address the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. In consultation with United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Japan will consider providing humanitarian assistance based on the needs on the ground.

Even against that harsh backdrop, we should not lose hope for a two-State solution. The crisis in Gaza underscores the urgent need to achieve a just, sustainable and comprehensive peace. It is important for the international community to overcome the current crisis and foster a proper environment that would allow both the Palestinian and the Israeli parties to resume talks.

Japan will continue to assist Palestinian State-building efforts that aim at achieving a two-State solution. The Corridor for Peace and Prosperity and the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development are part of our initiatives. My Mission will elaborate on Japan's assistance at an appropriate occasion in future.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate, and the Secretary-General for his briefing. Brazil fully supports the Secretary-General's visit to the Middle East. We are confident that it will help bring about a ceasefire and respect for international humanitarian law. Brazil also expresses its appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine for their interventions.

The last time the Security Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.7164), the nine-month deadline for reaching a final status agreement between Israelis and Palestinians was just expiring. On that occasion, Brazil and many other delegations regretted the lack of progress and underscored that failing to deal with the fundamental aspects of the Palestine question would only pose greater challenges in future. Peace in the Middle East is so fundamental and the stakes are so high that we simply cannot allow the future of Israelis and Palestinians — and therefore of the whole region — to be dictated by those who choose to perpetuate tension and conflict.

Brazil strongly condemned the abduction and heinous murder of the three young Israelis and a Palestinian youth and the chain of abhorrent violence that ensued. Acts of savagery cannot be tolerated. Beyond punishing those responsible for the recent excesses, it is necessary to put an end to the atmosphere of incitement that over the years has encouraged the perpetrators of such appalling crimes.

We further condemn the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, along with the disproportionate use of force,

which resulted in more than 600 Palestinians dead and thousands of wounded, many of them unarmed civilians and children. We also condemn the firing of rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel. We reject the current Israeli ground incursion into Gaza, which has led to more death and destruction and represents a serious setback to peace efforts. The new offensive could help trigger further instability in the Middle East and exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. We urge the Israelis to strictly respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

We also consider it necessary that Israel put an end to the blockade of Gaza immediately. We urge both parties to establish a permanent ceasefire and effectively cooperate with the Government of Egypt and the United Nations in that regard. The international community must not continue to passively stand by while gross violations are committed against civilians. We cannot proceed as if the flare-ups in violence were unavoidable, and therefore had to be tolerated.

Brazil reiterates its call for the Council to end its self-imposed distance, to fully carry out its responsibilities and to actively support and steer the peace process. Resuming peace talks is as urgent and necessary as ever. Only the implementation of the two-State solution will bring durable peace and security to Israel and Palestine and put an end to the suffering of the civilian population on both sides.

Let us not forget that the protection of civilians must be implemented in a universal and non-selective manner. The commendable emphasis placed by the Council on the protection of civilians when dealing with other items on its agenda cannot be sidestepped when it comes to the responsibility to protect Palestinians, who bear the brunt of the violence.

Brazil welcomes the formation of a Palestinian national unity Government. That is a significant step towards Palestinian reconciliation. It is also indispensable to building a prosperous and democratic State that is willing to honour from the outset all the previous commitments made by Palestine. We urge all those supporting the Government to abide by the previous agreements, in particular by rejecting violence and recognizing Israel.

Turning to Syria, Brazil welcomes the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014). The newly found unity among Security Council members should be extended to the

political track. It is deeply troubling that, while the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, the political process remains paralyzed. The mistaken belief that a military solution is possible through the provision of weapons to all belligerent parties in Syria can result only in more violence, instability and suffering.

We encourage Mr. Staffan de Mistura and Ambassador Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy to promote the early resumption of political negotiations. As recalled in the Fortaleza declaration adopted at the sixth Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa Summit last week in Brazil, “national dialogue and reconciliation are key to the political solution for the Syrian crisis”.

Brazil welcomes the removal of the last shipment of chemical weapons declared by Syria and supports the ongoing investigation of the alleged use of chlorine gas against civilian targets.

It is disheartening that the number of deaths, refugees and displaced people continues to grow, together with so many broken promises to put an end to violence.

We strongly condemn the continued violations of human rights committed by all sides, as consistently denounced by the Human Rights Council’s Independent Commission of Inquiry.

The recent deterioration in Iraq gives rise to grave concerns. The sad reality is that the current situation in that country derives directly from the unilateral intervention of 2003. The crisis was compounded by, among other failures, the dismantling and disbanding of the Iraqi army. As called for by the Fortaleza declaration, it is time now to

“refrain from interference that will further deepen the crisis and to support the Iraqi Government and the people of Iraq in their efforts to overcome the crisis and build a stable, inclusive and united Iraq.”

We urge Iraq’s political leaders to expedite the formation of an inclusive Government and to work to meet the needs of all Iraqi citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or sect.

Brazil strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks perpetrated in Lebanon and firmly supports the Lebanese Government in its fight against terrorism. Brazil’s participation in the international conference on support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, recently held in

Rome, was a clear demonstration of our commitment to support Lebanon's State institutions.

We also underscore the role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Brazil has been leading its Maritime Task Force since 2011 and has supplied a frigate as its flagship.

As in other neighbouring countries, in particular Turkey and Jordan, the spillover effects of the Syrian conflict impose a heavy burden on Lebanon, whose generosity in hosting more than 1 million Syrian refugees should be not only commended, but also concretely supported by the international community.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our support to the policy of disassociation from regional crises agreed in the Baabda Declaration of June 2012.

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

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate to consider the situation in the Middle East. We are overwhelmed by what is happening in Gaza.

In these trying times, I wish to start by commending the efforts of and expressing our appreciation to all of those who are engaged in efforts to bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza. In that regard, I would like to mention the Secretary-General, the Egyptian Government and the United States Secretary of State.

Since 7 July, a new military aggression has been conducted against the population in Gaza. What has been happening since that day is all the more shocking and appalling to millions around the world. More than 600 citizens have been killed, and the toll continues to rise, thousands have been wounded or maimed, lives have been destroyed, while homes, mosques, schools and hospitals have become military targets and reduced to ruin. Even olive trees — how symbolic — have been uprooted and burned in the tracks of armoured trucks.

Whatever the pretext for the new escalation, it remains a mere pretext. How can anyone justify the brutal shelling, aerial and maritime strikes, missiles and drones over densely populated areas? How can anyone bear the images of the children who have been torn from the sanctity of their innocence, while the world watches in horror as their impossible playground is turned into the open-air graves of those whose terrible guilt seems to be only that they are Palestinian?

In other areas there are other children, including Algerians. I have to mention one of them — a young Algerian three years of age, Abdullah Drage Yusuf, who was killed with his mother in a home that was struck by a missile. It cannot be said that the home was a militant base. He was buried with other Palestinians in Rafah cemetery.

How can anyone describe the situation from a legal, political or human rights angle? Where are the borders between what we see and the notions of collective punishment, mass killing and war crimes? I will leave it up to the conscience of each member of the Council to think about and maybe to take a stand.

Is the international community going to turn a blind eye to the situation and turn its back on all of its values and rights? Let us mention the basic one, namely, the right to life. The international community and the Security Council are promoting it and rightly defending it, including through lectures around the world.

What type of example are we setting? Are there exceptions among the universal rights? I do not wish to add to the comments of my colleagues and to that which the whole world is witnessing. Today urgent action is needed to put an end to the ordeal.

Our action — the Council's action — is called upon. It is needed individually and collectively for the sake of peace throughout the world. Let us not forget that Gaza is under blockade; or should I say, beleaguered for the past seven years in terms of food, medicine, gas, money, salaries and sometimes even water, which are heavily rationed, restricted or prohibited.

We must not forget that the unfulfilled promises, the ever-failing initiatives for the so-called establishment of peace, have added to the dwindling commitments and resulted in the mounting frustrations, helplessness and despair that represent flammable ingredients for a bleak future that certainly will not benefit any of the peoples or States of the region.

Let us not forget that the Palestinian territory is under an illegal, oppressive and extremely brutal occupation. Occupation is the core of the issue. The Secretary-General rightfully mentioned in the morning that the root causes, putting an end to the occupation and materializing the national legitimate rights in a viable State for the Palestinians is the only way out — through negotiations.

For the time being, our urgent duty — moral, political and legal — is to protect civilians.

We — the international community and the Security Council — should act urgently and be aware of an important issue. The current aggression will contribute only to an even greater widening of the gap between the aspiration for peace and security for all. Security cannot be built upon aggression. It would be a terrible illusion to think that security will prevail one day in the absence of peace or prospects for peace. We should not try to test the “How late is too late?” theory.

The lack of a conclusion to the international community’s endeavour, or inaction on the part of the Council according to its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations, could become part of the problem. It is our hope that we will overcome the problem before then.

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

Mr. Emvula (Namibia): It is a pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over the Council for the month of July. I wish to thank you for organizing this very important debate at this crucial moment, which affords the broader United Nations membership an opportunity to address the challenges facing the Middle East, particularly the people of Palestine.

At the outset, I wish to state that my delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries.

My delegation wishes to express concern at the continuing turmoil and deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the repressive and illegal measures that continue to be undertaken by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people.

I join others in condemning the latest violations, provocation and escalation of aggressive measures carried out by the Israeli forces aimed at collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The Israeli forces continue to carry out airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, injuring more and more Palestinians and causing great fear and distress among the population, who continue to suffer from deplorable living conditions as a result of Israel’s inhumane and unlawful blockade.

While we condemn the indiscriminate rocket fire emanating from Gaza and targeting Israeli cities and civilian infrastructure, we maintain that such attacks

do not justify the disproportionate use of force and collective punishment of 1.7 million Palestinians living in Gaza. The death toll caused by the occupying forces stands at significantly more than 600 Palestinians, including the killing of innocent women and children. Thousands of Palestinian homes continue to be destroyed or severely damaged by the indiscriminate Israeli air attacks, displacing thousands of Palestinians and further destroying critical civilian infrastructure, including waste-water treatment facilities, water distribution networks, hospitals and schools, including United Nations facilities, all of which should stop.

It is cynical to equally attribute blame to both parties when one is the occupier and possesses unparalleled military might, which it uses indiscriminately, leading to civilian casualties. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for all those war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people. We call on the Human Rights Council to take immediate action to investigate the genocide against the people of Palestine.

The Israeli actions are in clear violation of its obligations as an occupying Power under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to protect the civilian population under its occupation. Israel cannot be allowed to remain immune from the provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law governing such situations. If Israel continues to ignore the demands to respect international law, measures aimed at ensuring an end to such violations and that the rule of law prevails must be taken in response.

It remains the responsibility of the United Nations and the international community to ensure that the question of Palestine is resolved in all its aspects. While supporting the steadfastness and resolve of the Palestinian leadership in the face of such unprovoked aggression against its land and people, we reiterate our total condemnation of all those illegal actions and crimes being perpetrated by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which dramatically raise tensions and destabilize the situation on the ground.

In that context, we call for the immediate establishment of a committee to investigate such horrendous crimes and to bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with the relevant international legal instruments at our disposal. We furthermore urge the international community to continue to provide the

necessary humanitarian assistance to ease the suffering of the affected Palestinian communities, in particular vulnerable members of society such as women, children and the elderly.

We welcome the ongoing efforts aimed at negotiating an immediate ceasefire and appeal to both parties to commit to embracing the opportunity and to abiding by their previous agreements and obligations with regard to a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians living side by side within secure borders. Israel's ongoing violation of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, threatens to further destabilize the very fragile situation and to seriously undermine the future of the peace process, which has been suspended as a result of Israel's unilateral decision to halt the negotiations.

The international community, including the Security Council, cannot continue to fail to act to hold Israel accountable for such flagrant breaches of international law. Such continued failure on the part of the international community has only further emboldened the occupying Power and bolstered its impunity, which has resulted in the continuation of the violations that I have just mentioned, and therefore the failure to secure a just and lasting peace.

We wish to warn and remind the Council that the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is the result of its continued failure to effectively address the conflict by finding a lasting and sustainable solution, as required through the implementation of the various Council resolutions that call for a two-State solution. For how long will the Council continue to adopt resolutions that are never adhered to?

Let me conclude by reiterating Namibia's support for the efforts being undertaken by the Secretary-General and our unwavering backing of and solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just cause for freedom, independence and social justice. We also affirm our support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, its unconditional admission as a full Member of the United Nations and its agencies and for it to take its rightful place among the community of nations.

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

Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Ecuador has strongly condemned the

disproportionate military operations of the Israeli army against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, which have caused several hundred casualties — men, women and children, all of whom were innocent — without to date seeing any clear evidence of a halt to the violence.

Given such facts, the Government of Ecuador has demanded and urges the immediate suspension of the aggression against the Palestinian civilian population and calls on the State of Israel to exercise maximum restraint and to act in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. The defence of a country and its right to defend itself under no circumstances justifies subjecting thousands of innocent civilians to pain and suffering or flouting what we know as international law.

We must start by acknowledging what this very body, the United Nations, has historically prescribed, namely, that the two-State solution is the only way to permanently end such unlawful subjugation as a result of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. At the same time, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the settlement policy, the wall and the arbitrary arrest of Palestinian civilians must also cease.

Ecuador firmly believes in the just cause of the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. My country therefore fully recognizes the State of Palestine within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. My delegation wishes to recall that, two years ago, the General Assembly welcomed the State of Palestine as an observer member of the United Nations. That vast majority of States is now waiting to see the State of Palestine soon become a fully fledged member of the General Assembly. That has not been possible to date owing to the obvious action of one of the members of the Security Council.

In the light of the foregoing, it is essential that we recall the crucial obligation of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council has the main responsibility for fulfilling that task. As has been demanded by Palestine, the Arab countries and the countries of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we too demand that the members of the Security Council act more forcefully and not give more time to the aggressor to conclude at whatever cost strategic tasks that are not necessarily our own.

We demand more boldness and determination in the face of a situation of abuse and disproportionate

violence by Israel against Palestine, which also have negative repercussions on the stability of the entire Middle East region. The Security Council should always act without gross biases in any situation that it is called upon to address.

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

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and for your leadership in the presidency throughout this month. I would also like to thank the Russian Federation for its work last month.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Movement has vehemently expressed its condemnation of the latest aggression against the Palestinian people. The Movement, made up of the vast majority of the international community, has once again raised its voice to ask that the rest of the international community, in particular the Security Council, take strong and immediate measures to prevent Palestinian men, women and children from dying, to immediately stop the aggression and end the genocidal slaughter that has been carried out by Israel against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

The Security Council should condemn in the strongest terms the aggression and massacre of more than 650 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and the more than 3,700 injured people to date.

As we have said on countless occasions, the Nicaraguan people feel as if it were their own the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly at this time when that heroic people are victims once again of Israeli terrorist attacks by air, sea and land, in violation of all provisions of all international conventions and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council itself, in open violation of the most basic rights of that fraternal people — their right to life, to live without military occupation, without a criminal blockade, without the suffocation of the settlements and without the horror of ethnic cleansing and collective punishment.

In the face of so much death and destruction, of such genocide, there is no justification for the

Security Council to continue to fail to comply with its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It should impose an immediate ceasefire and condemn Israel and hold it responsible for the genocide committed. The Palestinian people continue to be the victims of the double standards of a permanent member of the Security Council.

We know that the main threat to peace and security in the Middle East is Israel's refusal of peace itself and of peaceful coexistence with the State of Palestine. Nicaragua, through our President, has once again made an appeal in that regard:

“We have no choice but to call upon the international community. And from this Plaza La Fe we call on the international community to put a stop to the acts of war against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and eventually reach a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples that will enable those two fraternal nations, who are both children of God, to live as God intended: in peace.”

It is time for the Security Council to fulfil its historic responsibility and not allow one of its members to continue to cover Israel's impunity and blackmail and approve the admission of the State of Palestine as a full Member of the Organization, in accordance with the decision of the vast majority of the international community when it decided through the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of non-Member Observer State to the United Nations.

There will be no peace in the Middle East until this historic injustice at the root of the conflict is rectified, namely, when the Palestinian people's right to a free and independent State within the borders established in 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital is fulfilled. Only a viable Palestinian State can guarantee peace and security in the region.

Before concluding, we would like to reiterate our concern over the developments in the Middle East and North Africa, where we have seen that imposing the policy of regime change, the funding of recognized terrorist groups, the promotion of warmongering policies at the expense of dialogue and negotiation, and interference and intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States have all been a constant in recent years, especially for the people and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Such illegal acts and policies, which are the cause of conflicts and tremendous refugee

flows, are in fact the real threat to international peace and security, the very thing we say we most want to preserve.

We hope that the Security Council will know how to act in the face of those acts and policies consistent with its responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, I wish to share a thought from our fondly remembered Brazilian colleague Paulo Freire, which will serve guide us: “Nobody ‘is’ if they prohibit others from ‘being’”. In the end, the Security Council should thus allow the State of Palestine to “be” a reality.

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

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I shall deliver an abridged version of my statement. The full text is being circulated in the Chamber.

In recent weeks, we have been witnessing with the greatest concern the deep human and humanitarian suffering caused by Israel’s operation in the Gaza Strip. Since 8 July, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 4,000 have been wounded. Homes and key infrastructure have been destroyed, hospitals have been targeted and more than 100,000 people have been displaced. The world’s conscience has been shaken, among other things, by the images of the killing of four children, aged 9 to 12, on a Gaza beach, and later by the attack on Shujaiya.

Turkey strongly condemns the inhumane attacks on Gazans. They are more than alarming; they should be condemned by the entire international community. As of today, Turkey has declared three days of national mourning in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The Israeli operation in the Palestinian territory is in violation of international law. In fact, it constitutes collective punishment of the Palestinian people, who are striving to sustain their lives under occupation. We once again demand that Israel immediately halt its operations in Gaza. All violence must end. The parties should urgently engage in negotiations towards a lasting ceasefire. Turkish authorities are constantly in contact with Palestinian and regional leaders and other relevant stakeholders to discuss solutions to that end.

The world should give the strongest response to the human tragedy in Gaza unfolding before its eyes. The international community, in particular the Security

Council, should assume its responsibility to take the necessary measures to stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people without delay and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to the region.

Alleviating those gross humanitarian needs should be our immediate concern. Turkey has already accelerated its humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency and the Red Crescent are conducting humanitarian operations bilaterally and in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to that effect.

Of course, the establishment of peace and security in the Middle East is possible only by taking viable steps towards the settlement of the Palestinian question. Turkey has always supported all efforts towards a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on two States living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, the relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. In that regard, we support the proposal of President Abbas to find an appropriate international response to the protection needs of Palestinian civilians.

The Syrian regime continues to brutally oppress the Syrian people in flagrant violation of international law by taking advantage of the lack of effective action by the international community. Those violations must be stopped and those responsible must be held accountable. The elimination of Syria’s chemical weapons programme remains to be completed. The uninterrupted and effective delivery of cross-border and cross-line humanitarian operations is key to responding to the most urgent needs in Syria.

Unfortunately, the regime has also consistently violated the provisions of resolution 2139 (2014). Those violations led to resolution 2165 (2014). We hope that the latter will not share the fate of resolution 2139 (2014). Turkey has already started to cooperate with the United Nations on the implementation of resolution 2165 (2014).

A political settlement remains the priority for achieving a peaceful end to the Syrian conflict. In that regard, Turkey welcomes the appointment of Mr. Staffan de Mistura as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and hopes that his appointment will finally revitalize the efforts to reach a political

settlement on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

I would like to take this opportunity once more to call upon Israel to end its aggression against Gaza and return to the negotiating table with a genuine desire to put an end to the decades-long search for peace. As we always have in the past, we will remain in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the extremely difficult days they are experiencing.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak about the situation in Palestine.

The events we are discussing in this Chamber are tragic. The Charter on which the Organization was founded states that the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which has brought untold sorrow to mankind. The same Charter, which is quoted with such grand eloquence in so many statements, says that the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members. However, this meeting and the scourge afflicting the Palestinian people are clear proof that the international order cannot save Palestine from the untold suffering brought about by Israeli aggression.

This meeting, this Council and the tragedy of Palestine are clear proof that this principle — the sovereign equality of all its Members — is not true. What the Charter says is not true. Members in this Organization are not equal. I will not speak about my country, which is one of the 193 Members, but I shall refer to the statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, whereby 120 countries demand that the Council stop the invasion into Gaza and put an end to the repeated Israeli military attacks against the Palestinian people. Many statements have been made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which brings together more than two thirds of the membership of the Organization, calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory.

We are not equal, as the Charter claims, because only one of the five privileged members with the right to veto can paralyse any initiative for action. A single member has more power than two thirds of the Members of the United Nations. That same permanent member

with the right to veto, which has justified those crimes with the “right to self-defense” formula, is complicit through action and inaction for those atrocities. Of course, I am referring to the United States, the same Member State that has hindered Palestine’s recognition as a full member of the Organization.

However, I do not believe that those considerations, which are discussed in the grey corridors of international diplomacy, went through the minds of any of the eight members of the Abu Jarad family when an Israeli missile struck their house in northern Gaza on 14 July, killing all of them, including five children aged 15, 13, 12 and 3 years and 6 months.

While we will never forget the atrocities the Nazis committed against the Jewish people, we also cannot remain silent in the face of these tragic events. It appears that in this story Goliath uses attack planes and missile launchers, while David wears a scarf.

In that context, I want to devote the four minutes that I have to the Palestinian people and to the Council. I apologize to the Palestinian people, through their representative and with our limited ability to reach them, from the bottom of our souls as a human beings. I want to apologize for the more than 600 Palestinians — men, women, the elderly and girls and boys — who lost their lives in the past few days. The international community, of which we are part, has failed them. We are failing them.

I want to apologize for the more than 3,500 Palestinian men, women, elderly and children who have been wounded and may be permanently disabled as a result of the Israeli aggression. The international community is failing them.

I apologize for the nearly 100 schools and the 18 medical facilities destroyed by the Israeli attack. The international community is failing them.

I apologize for the 72,000 children who will require specialized psychological counselling after these horrendous attacks. The international community is failing them.

I want to apologize for the 1,500 homes that have been totally or partially destroyed by the occupying Power. The international community is failing them.

I want to apologize for 6,000 Palestinians detained by the occupying Power. The international community is failing them.

I want to apologize for the illegal settlements. I want to apologize for the inhumane wall being built to isolate them. The international community is failing them.

I now want to address the Council — its 15 members and the 5 that have a privilege that makes us unequal, the right to veto — but above all the Government of the United States. We well know that what the world is witnessing today is the result of the illegal and illegitimate Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. We have lost our innocence. We know that many of the diplomatic efforts only give more time to Israel to pursue its military objectives.

The Council has the power to stop that, and it does not do it. It does not impose sanctions against Israel. There will be no decisions taken to stop those atrocities. As President Evo Morales has said, we must put an end to that genocide and prosecute those responsible. Bolivia demands in the strongest terms that the Council put an end to the Israeli military aggression against Palestine. We call upon them to shoulder their responsibility and put an end to the building of the wall. We demand that an end be put to illegal settlements. We demand that Palestinian prisoners be freed. We demand compliance with the Geneva Conventions, human rights conventions and the Rome Statute. We call for a sanctions regime against Israel. We want aggression and the occupation to end. The Palestinians must have a free, sovereign and independent State.

I will conclude this statement by recalling the words of Nelson Mandela, that great revolutionary who took no half-measures but fought for the freedom of peoples. He said: “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians”.

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

Mr. Mukerji (India): India is deeply concerned at the steep escalation in the current conflict between Israel and Palestine, which has resulted in a large number of civilian casualties and heavy damage to property.

When the Council last held its open debate on this issue in April 2014 (see S/PV.7164), the direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine, which began in late July 2013 after a gap of more than two years, had ended without any outcome. Instead of a resumption of dialogue, we are today faced with the tragic resumption of conflict.

We in India are following the current situation with a great deal of concern. We have called upon both sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid taking actions that may further exacerbate the situation and threaten the peace and security of the region. India supports all efforts for an immediate ceasefire between the parties involved.

We remain hopeful that a sustainable ceasefire will be reached between the two sides, linked to the resumption of the peace process, for a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue. India remains firmly convinced that dialogue remains the only viable option that can effectively address the issues confronting the region and its people. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to agree to a ceasefire and return to the negotiating table.

India's deep association with, and continuing commitment to, Palestine is rooted in our modern history that goes back to our own struggle for independence. We would also like to reiterate our support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel.

India has consistently held that the blockade of Gaza, which adversely affects essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development, must be lifted. We reiterate that this blockade and the issue of increasing settlement activities need to be addressed to take forward the peace process so as to reach a mutually acceptable political solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me first commend you, Mr. President, for having convened this very important meeting in a very timely manner. Let me also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. I should like also to associate the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the statement to be made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Today we are witnessing another barbaric armed invasion into the Gaza Strip by Israel, posing a great

threat to peace and security in the Middle East. This ongoing armed invasion by Israel is characterized by indiscriminate destruction and massive civilian killings, giving rise to shock, outrage and condemnation on the part of the international community.

In this regard, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to clarify its position as follows.

First, Israel should immediately put an end to its armed invasion into the Gaza Strip, as requested by the international community. The Middle East, along with the Korean peninsula, is one of the largest hotspots in the world. The core issue in the Middle East is the question of Palestine. Israel, since the first day of its inception, following the end of the Second World War, has been a country with a history of bloody aggression and provocations against Palestine and Arab countries. Israel's armed invasion should not be tolerated, and it cannot be justified on any grounds. The more Israel expands its armed invasion, based on ridiculous arguments, as we saw this morning, the more Israel will expose its true colours as an aggressor and a source of threat and tension in the region, thereby inviting greater condemnation from the international community.

Secondly, Israel should stop the indiscriminate mass killing of civilians, as requested by the international community. Under international law, mass civilian killings are regarded as a crime against humanity and a war crime.

Israel's indiscriminate mass civilian killings are becoming ever more brutal because they are targeting even young children, who are the happiness and future of mankind.

The indiscriminate mass killings of civilians by Israeli soldiers are becoming more savage because they are targeting civilian hospitals. All of these killings targeted at defenceless civilians should not be tolerated, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea condemns Israel in the strongest terms.

Thirdly, the Security Council should carry out its mission to ensure international peace and security, as requested by the international community. The Council is not a political tool to be used by one specific country for its selfish needs and to abuse power. The question of Palestine has now reached a very dangerous and critical stage; all this is related directly to the behaviour of that one country, the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council. The United States has since

the beginning defended and supported Israel, pushing it towards war, with the ridiculous argument we heard this morning that Israel has the right to defend itself. These kinds of acts on the part of the United States can only have a destructive impact on the credibility of the Security Council.

The establishment of the State of Palestine is the inalienable right of its people. Giving support and solidarity to the just struggle of the people of Palestine to establish an independent State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, is receiving support from an overwhelming international majority, which no one can stop. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains consistent in its very strong support for the just struggle of the people of Palestine. We urge Israel to stop all of the illegal and unlawful military actions occurring now in that part of the world and respond positively to international demands.

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

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate of the Security Council. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing.

I wish to focus my statement on the question of Palestine.

This debate comes amid the rapidly worsening situation in the Gaza Strip. The horrible and indiscriminate attacks upon the Palestinian civilian population, especially in Shujaiya and Khan Younis, along with the similar violence unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territory in the past several weeks, have shocked the people of Indonesia.

It is particularly saddening to consider that those brutal attacks are taking place during Ramadan, the holy month during which the blessings of the Almighty have been promised to us. Rather than focusing on the blessings of the Almighty, the reality is that the Palestinian people is forced to endure a brutal and inhumane assault by Israel. In that regard, Indonesia strongly condemns Israel's indiscriminate killings and its excessive as well as disproportionate use of force.

Indonesia is encouraged by the Secretary-General's recent words on the Israeli offensive in Gaza, which stressed that "there can be no military solution to

this conflict". We certainly welcome the initiatives of the relevant parties and key countries in pursuit of a ceasefire, as well as the engagement of the Secretary-General through his travel to the region. Indonesia hopes that those actions will strongly encourage the Security Council to act.

Israel's military aggression in Gaza must stop immediately, and it is the responsibility of the Council to act decisively to bring it to a halt. For Indonesia, the Israeli aggression is yet another test of whether the Security Council will live up to its responsibilities towards international peace and the protection of vulnerable populations under the Charter of the United Nations. Should the Council again fail to act, that would not only represent a failure of the Organization, but also the defeat of peace and humanity.

The loss of civilians on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not only deeply disturbing, it also prolongs the animosity and resentment between the two communities. So long as the violence continues, the prospects for a just and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbours will remain on the distant horizon. Despite that obvious fact, Israel persists in its acts of defiance, ignoring the fact that its occupation is the root cause of the violence. It is obvious that stopping the madness of the Israeli aggression is only the first step towards peace. Without Israel's withdrawal from all of its occupied territories, the world will continue to witness violence, not only in Palestine but in Israel itself. I reiterate: it is Palestine that is occupied by Israel. It is Palestine that is struggling for its sovereignty and independence. Suppression of that legitimate struggle is not self-defence, but a blatant violation of international law.

I would like to reiterate that the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the two-State solution, is now more pressing than ever. The world is witness to the fact that the might of the Israeli armed forces has only strengthened the tenacity and determination of the Palestinian people. Therefore, again echoing the words of the Secretary-General, there can be no military solution to the conflict. Only the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, can yield what we all yearn for: peace between Israel and Palestine.

To conclude, I wish to express once again Indonesia's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their legitimate struggle for self-determination. I would also

like to call again on the Council to act immediately and decisively to stop the Israeli aggression, to ensure unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for all victims and to bring all parties back to the negotiating table.

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

Mr. Waheed (Maldives): It is with a sombre spirit that the Maldives takes this opportunity to speak on the situation in the Middle East, a region that has throughout the past millennia been plagued by conflict and which today faces one of its darkest hours. Although the Middle East is embroiled in many conflicts, the greatest need at this moment lies undeniably with the State of Palestine. With more than 500 people killed over the past two weeks, the majority of them civilians, including women, children and the elderly, the toll on the future of the Palestinian people is immeasurable. That toll will be exacerbated further by the lack of medical supplies and equipment and basic development that has resulted from Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. That toll will be but one more violation of international law on top of the occupation, aggression, extra-judicial executions, excessive and indiscriminate use of brutal force, forcible colonization, forced displacement and the collective punishment of an entire people and nation.

That toll is and has been, for the better part of the last century, too much to bear. The Maldives echoes the calls made in this Chamber for the de-escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the restoration of calm, the reinstatement of the November 2012 ceasefire and the immediate, unconditional end to the Israeli blockade. Furthermore, the Maldives calls for greater assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has issued an emergency appeal for assistance and is currently housing more than 84,000 displaced peoples, with that number soon likely to exceed 100,000.

The realization of peace in the Middle East will not be achieved unless bold decisions are made by the Security Council to fulfil its mandate to protect the vulnerable, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. A resolution from the Council calling for an immediate ceasefire, the reopening of the Gaza Strip based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, an end to the blockade, and the guaranteed protection of civilian populations is long overdue and much wanted.

During the holy month of Ramadan, the prayers of the Maldivian people have been for those who have lost life and limb in this conflict. The wanton destruction, violence and hatred that have marred this time weighs heavily on the souls of 1.5 billion Muslims the world over. The Maldives reiterates its enduring support for the legitimate and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to freedom, justice and dignity.

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

Ms. Mørch Smith (Norway): Our complete statement will be available on PaperSmart.

Developments in the Middle East since our last meeting (see S/PV.7164) are cause for deep concern. For the fourth time in the seven years since Hamas took control over the Gaza Strip, violence has flared up and inflicted an intolerable toll on civilians.

That violence, coming after the suspension of the United States-led initiative to negotiate a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization shows that the status quo is unsustainable. Reaching a final status agreement would have abrogated the Israeli occupation of Palestine, granted the Palestinian people a sovereign State and opened the way to broad recognition of Israel as promised by the Arab Peace Initiative. An agreement would have laid the ground for nurturing peace. Instead, massive violence now incites unlimited hatred and causes devastating suffering for civilians.

Norway condemns the rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. Israel has the right to defend its citizens. Yet Israel has an obligation to respect the requirements under humanitarian law, an obligation shared by all the combatant Palestinian groups. Being the stronger party and operating in very densely populated areas only adds to Israel's responsibility. We take note of Israel's acceptance of the ceasefire initiative proposed by Egypt a week ago. Norway condemns the loss of more than 600 civilian lives, among them many women and children. That unacceptable level of suffering of civilians is out of proportion. Civilian casualties, including the killing of four children on the beach in Gaza and the military operation in Shujaiya, should be swiftly and thoroughly investigated.

The ongoing military confrontation is a threat to international peace and stability. Going beyond the recent press statements, the Security Council could take

more decisive action to ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

Norway has repeatedly called for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and for a long-term and durable ceasefire. The bloodshed and suffering must end. That goal, however, also requires addressing the complex underlying causes of the conflict.

First, Norway calls for concerted international action by all friends of Israel and Palestine in support of the Egyptian initiative and leadership to broker an unconditional and immediate cessation of hostilities.

Secondly, Norway calls for addressing the appalling humanitarian situation in Gaza. Recalling resolution 1860 (2009) and the understanding reached for the truce that ended the 2012 confrontations, we see that the challenges are clear. There is an urgent need for humanitarian and medical assistance and for the reconstruction of private homes and infrastructure. There is a need to bring the security arrangements in Gaza in line with the rest of Palestine.

The people in Gaza cannot continue to live under a blockade and remain dependent on assistance from the international community. Border crossings must be reopened, and access and movement for people and goods must be facilitated. Key to achieving that is, in the short term, to reunite Palestine under one integrated and reformed authority, headed by President Abbas, as the Palestinian factions have agreed to do.

As the Chair of the Donor Group and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC) and in partnership with the European Union presidency, Norway will take an initiative calling for an international donors conference for Palestine in Oslo as soon as a ceasefire is announced. The conference will address immediate challenges and call for pledges of international assistance. On the margins of the General Assembly, Norway will chair an ordinary meeting of the AHLIC, hosted by the Secretary-General, to coordinate external assistance for building the Palestinian institutions and sustainable economic growth.

Thirdly, Norway calls on the Security Council to request that the parties return to a political process aimed at solving the outstanding issues of their conflict peacefully, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, previous commitments and agreements between the parties.

Without hope for the future, the freedom to live dignified lives, and respect for rights and international norms, there will be no lasting peace for either of the civilian populations. Without lasting peace, mutual respect and broad recognition of the two peoples and their rights, there will not be security and peace.

We should not forget the other crises in the region.

The situation in Syria remains extremely serious, despite the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) in the past week. Norway remains firm in its condemnation of the blatant disregard for civilian suffering, human rights and international humanitarian law demonstrated by Syrian Government forces as well by as other parties to the tragic civil war. The atrocities committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and its seizure of control of considerable territories in north-eastern Syria and in north-western and central parts of Iraq threaten not only Iraq and Syria, but the whole region.

Global resources and capacity for humanitarian responses are under severe strain. Norway calls on the States members of the Security Council to redouble their efforts to address the root causes of those developments and to agree on concerted action to restore stability and calm.

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

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the past few days, we have witnessed horror and barbarous acts directed against the Palestinian people who have been besieged by Israel in Gaza. Those actions can be seen only as part of the continuous Israeli aggression that kills innocent people and commits atrocities, such as the massacre in Shujaiya, where most of the victims were children. We condemn all of the acts of aggression committed by Israel, which violate international humanitarian law and human rights.

Israeli aggression against Gaza is not a way of defending Israel against the Palestinian people. How can one kill hundreds of women, the elderly and children in order to defend a population? Security cannot be achieved through military might or by targeting innocent civilians, as Israel is doing today. Such aggression will push everyone towards confrontation by all means and destroy any hope of peace in the region. Such actions will not lead to the security to which the people aspire.

Those who consider that the assault against Gaza is justified by the killing of the three Israeli youths are

wrong. The Israeli authorities should have conducted an investigation to find the culprits, given that the crime took place in territory under the control of Israel, which, as the occupying authority, must, according to international law, be held responsible for the crimes committed against unarmed Palestinians. What has been taking place in Gaza is collective punishment and State terrorism that requires a clear response by the Security Council, given that the number of victims and the dead continues to grow after the land invasion and the air and sea assault. What is taking place in Gaza is not in response to terrorism, and the people of Gaza are not terrorists. They are a people who are strong and who seek to regain the rights that have been stripped from them over the past decades.

For some time now, the international community has sought to broker peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Palestinian unity was considered a propitious environment for peace. However, the current Israeli actions are a real impediment to that peace. With regard to the daily tragedy for the people of Gaza and the siege against over 1.5 million Palestinians, there has been a violation of the November 2012 agreement between the Israeli and Gazan authorities. There also has been a violation of the agreements concerning the exchange of prisoners. Israel is responsible for all those violations.

Qatar spares no effort to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and we will continue to support our brethren, the Palestinian people. We are committed to stopping the violence. We also commend international efforts to reach a humanitarian truce and ceasefire. We have encouraged negotiations, including those in Cairo. We urge the international community to reach a just and lasting agreement, a ceasefire and respect for international law and human rights, thereby guaranteeing the security of the Palestinian people.

The Security Council has a special responsibility to prevent any attempt to endanger the security of the Palestinian people. It needs to demand that Israel put an end to the assault so that humanitarian assistance can reach Gaza and so that a solution can be found.

With regard to Syria, the Syrian authorities have continued to attack their own people by targeting civilians. The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/427) clearly points to the use of bombs against civilians, sieges, the infliction of famine on civilians and the refusal to allow access to humanitarian and medical assistance. The situation in Syria has reached such a

state as a result of the paralysis of the international community in regard to meeting the needs of the population.

The Security Council's adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) clearly points to the international community's desire to promote the well-being of the Syrian people and to implement resolution 2139 (2014) so as to put a halt to the crisis, which will only deteriorate until a solution is found that will guarantee the rights of the Syrian people and condemn crimes against humanity.

We congratulate Mr. de Mistura and the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Ramzy, on their appointments. We hope that that will make it possible to reach a settlement of the crisis.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ahmad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, with its repercussions for peace and stability in the region, has reached a very dangerous phase, given the international indifference that has not sought to force Israel to end its occupation of the Arab territories or to end the serious violations of international legal instruments, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The international community has not halted the excesses of the settlements, displacements, carnage and continued aggression. What is taking place today in Gaza are sporadic raids and killings of children, women and the elderly. That is just a new chapter in the Israeli aggression against the sons of the Palestinian people. We hereby reaffirm that Israel could not have carried out such excesses in its policy of aggression without the support and protection of some well-known countries and the pretexts and excuses they have provided for Israel. Those States are complicit in those policies, and they are legally responsible and accountable for the results.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the carnage and the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, our brothers in Gaza. We condemn the international silence in the face of this ongoing crime, and we call upon the Council to compel Israel to halt its barbaric acts, which threaten peace and security in the region.

Some in this Chamber have claimed that they are committed to supporting the rights of the Syrian people.

Yet the hollowness of that statement and its hypocrisy have been revealed in that they have not said anything about that except at the end of their statements on the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, as if that was not a right of the Syrian people, as if the Golan were not occupied Syrian territory. Every year, a number of resolutions are adopted calling on Israel to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 line. Where is the discussion on human rights and international humanitarian law by those delegations when it comes to the settlements campaign of the Israelis and the suffering of the Syrian people under the occupation in the Golan for more than half a century? In the Golan, Syrian citizens have been exposed to the worst forms of repression, racial discrimination, arrest and torture. They are deprived of their natural resources, including oil, gas and water.

The support by Israel of terrorist groups working in the occupied Golan Heights is a flagrant violation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, despite the requests of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the international community. That has exposed United Nations personnel to dangers and undermines United Nations activity in the region. That was evident in the kidnapping of UNDOF staff and their exposure to firing, as they have been targeted by terrorist groups supported by Israel.

On that subject we would point out that the most recent report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF (S/2014/401), which reaffirms that Israel has transferred terrorist groups to Israeli hospitals through the separation line so that they can return to the separation zone and pursue their terrorist activities. Israel is in communication with them, and they provide them with closed boxes, the contents of which we are unfamiliar with. That is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974, Council resolutions and international law.

Given the international silence with regard to Israeli practices, Israel has again mounted further aggression in Palestinian territories and has targeted civilian areas more than once in recent times. The Secretary-General's report on UNDOF, which I have just referred to, also mentions Israeli aggression against Syrian territories on 18 and 19 March as being the most serious violations committed since the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The activities pursued by Israel have increased tension in the region to an unprecedented level. That may well have serious consequences that will not just be limited to this region.

It is for that reason that we call upon the United Nations, including the Council, to shoulder its responsibility in accordance with the Charter with regard to ending the Israeli occupation, halting Israel's barbaric policies and forcing it to respect the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including resolution 497 (1981), on the occupied Syrian Golan, which calls upon Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, to the line of 4 June 1967.

Finally, we reiterate our rejection of some delegations' attempts to disregard the main issue on the agenda, namely, the Middle East and ending the Israeli occupation in the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and to discuss the domestic issues of other countries under the guise of discussing the Middle East. Therefore, in order to avoid becoming a party to such attempts, which we reject, I will not respond to such attempts under this agenda item, nor to the delegations that violate the Charter of the United Nations and international law via their attempts to provide support, housing, weapons and training to terrorists and mercenaries, and which assist their return to Syria through neighbouring countries and spread extremism and terrorist destruction in Syria and throughout the entire region.

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

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July.

The current Israeli invasion of Gaza is a collective indictment of the international community, the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. History will indeed judge the United Nations and members of the Security Council harshly for the failure to carry out their historic responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security.

For its part, South Africa has condemned violence from all parties to the current conflict. We continue to call for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the firing of rockets and Israel's disproportionate military actions. There cannot, however, be any justification for flagrant violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Security Council cannot be caught using double standards, such as calling for accountability for violations of international law taking place somewhere,

including calls to refer situations to the International Criminal Court, while not doing so when the same acts are committed by Israel. The most glaring weakness of the Organization in its almost 70 years of existence continues to be the manner in which it deals with the Israeli-Palestinian question.

The past few days since the conflict started and the subsequent Israeli ground invasion of Gaza began have neither seen nor resulted in any meaningful action on the part of the Council, which is the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We have heard condemnations from speakers before us and some members of the Council, but the biggest question posed to us, and particularly to the Council, by the people, children, women and the elderly of Palestine is: What are you doing about our plight, the indignity we continue to suffer at the hands of the occupiers and the killing of our children, mothers and grandparents?

The Israelis know from experience over the years that they will suffer no consequences of their actions carried out in violation of all known provisions of international law. Who is the most powerful party to the conflict and who should bear the greatest degree of responsibility and accountability? The reality is that the whole crisis is meant to divert attention from the real issues faced daily by the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination and freedom.

We should all be reminded that at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian question is the perpetual occupation by Israel and the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, equality, freedom and justice. The root cause of the conflict has to be addressed, namely, the two-State solution that consists of the creation of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, existing side by side with the State of Israel.

We also call for the immediate admission of the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations with all rights and privileges. The continued lack of action on the part of the Security Council on the Palestinian application for full membership is not justified and serves only to give undue advantage to the Israelis at the expense of the Palestinians.

There must be an immediate ceasefire now, to stop all of the carnage that is currently taking place as we debate the matter. The parties should return to negotiations, as there can be no military solution to the conflict.

South Africa has welcomed the formation of a national unity Government by the Palestinians. The South African Government has announced 10 million rand in humanitarian aid to Gaza to address the current plight of the Palestinians caused by the military ground operation.

The people and Government of South Africa will continue to identify with the Palestinian cause and to contribute to efforts towards a durable and sustainable political solution to the crisis.

We continue to be inspired by the words of our former late President Mandela, who said, “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

The South African Government has today announced its intention to dispatch a team to Israel and Palestine to convey our growing concern about the escalation of violence there. President Zuma will also invite President Abbas on a working visit to South Africa.

In conclusion, we call on the Council to shoulder its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations and to adopt a draft resolution that will send an unequivocal and strong message that the indiscriminate and arbitrary killing of civilians on both sides has to stop and that there will be accountability for the gross violations of international law in all its aspects.

The Security Council cannot afford the luxury of permanent paralysis and inaction regarding this matter. The status quo is not sustainable and will forever remain an indelible mark on the aims and objectives of the Organization.

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

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) in this important meeting of the Council.

Let me start by conveying the sympathy and condolences of the members of the Movement to the Palestinian people and their leadership on the tragic loss of life and devastation that they have suffered in the recent period as a result of the indiscriminate, brutal shelling and aerial strikes, followed by a massive ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, by the Israeli occupying forces. The attacks and invasion

clearly constitute deliberate reprisals and collective punishment against an entire civilian population, in grave breach of international law.

The latest Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has caused high civilian casualties, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where more than 600 Palestinians — most of them women, children and elderly persons — have been killed and thousands have been injured, hundreds of them critically, by the Israeli occupying forces.

It is particularly tragic that women and children constitute the majority of the victims of the indiscriminate, lethal military strikes. In that regard, according to estimates by United Nations bodies and independent agencies present on the ground, more than three quarters of the victims have been civilians. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has determined that more than one quarter of the fatalities have been children.

Moreover, the indiscriminate Israeli bombardment, coupled with the ground invasion, against densely populated civilian areas has caused widespread destruction and damage to civilian property and vital civilian infrastructure and has devastated and disrupted all aspects of life in Gaza, which is already long-suffering under the illegitimate, suffocating Israeli blockade. The massive Israeli military offensive, which is unjustifiable under any pretext, and the constant violence, provocation and incitement against the Palestinian people, have caused widespread trauma, fear and distress among the entire civilian population and must be condemned.

In the light of the dire humanitarian situation, especially in the Gaza Strip, the Non-Aligned Movement believes that there is an urgent need to help the Palestinian people, including through the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of Palestinian civilians.

NAM therefore calls on the international community to provide emergency assistance to alleviate the great suffering caused by the regrettable deterioration and destabilization of the situation on the ground. In that regard, NAM calls for urgent additional support to UNRWA for the provision of the necessary food and other humanitarian aid to the Palestine refugees and other displaced civilians in Gaza.

Despite efforts by regional and international actors, including the Council's 12 July call for a ceasefire and by NAM, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States, Israel, the occupying Power, has defiantly persisted in its military aggression and ground invasion against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation, in grave contravention of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The intransigence on the part of the occupying Power is the continuation its practice of blatantly ignoring the demands of the international community to end its occupation and to stop its illegal policies and practices that, over the past six decades, have destabilized regional and international peace and security and claimed the lives, land, dignity and welfare of millions of Palestinian people.

The atrocities committed by Israel during the past weeks add to a long list of grave breaches perpetrated by that regime over the past six decades. That includes, but is not limited to, occupation, aggression, collective punishment, extrajudicial execution, the use of excessive, indiscriminate and brutal force, the confiscation and colonization of Palestinian land through massive settlements, the Wall and the transfer of hundreds of thousands of settlers, the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinian civilians, now numbering more than 6,000, the use of torture and other internationally prohibited abuses against civilians, the destruction of homes and the forced displacement of civilians.

This ongoing tragedy and injustice is mostly due to the culture of impunity under which the occupying Power has systematically and willfully perpetrated its violations over the years — impunity undoubtedly fostered by the repeated failure of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to hold it accountable for its crimes and compel its compliance with the law.

In the two statements issued by the Non-Aligned Movement during the recent crisis, we stressed the urgent need for the Council to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and to act decisively in order to uphold international law and to ensure accountability for its violation.

The very fragile situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, demands the urgent attention and action of the Security Council to stop the

current invasion of Gaza, to bring a halt to the repeated Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population, to end the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip and to ensure full respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of the Palestinian civilian population. The Security Council must assume a more active role in the crisis — to prevent the further destabilization of the situation, to stop a relapse into such deadly and destructive cycles of violence and to contribute to the efforts to achieve just and lasting peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the unwavering support and solidarity of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement for the Palestinian people and their relentless efforts to achieve their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations for freedom, justice, dignity and peace.

Allow me to say a few words in my national capacity in response to the Israeli representative, who today has once again leveled a baseless accusation against my country. It is ironic that while his regime is at this very moment inflicting brutal, indiscriminate and collective punishment on an entire defenceless civilian population and has an unparalleled and perverse record of using violence as a means to further its aims, he levels accusations against my Government.

That representative's remarks against my Government are absurd and are nothing more than a smokescreen to disguise the crimes that his regime has been committing for decades and to divert attention from the bloodbath that it is currently creating in the Gaza Strip. Throughout its history, that regime has never stopped using violence and terrorism to terrify the inhabitants of the land that it occupies and the peoples of the region with a view to keeping their land under occupation. Terrorizing civilians has always been its preferred way to oppress peoples throughout its existence.

As occupation lies at the heart of the Palestinian question, the Palestinian people, like every other people under foreign occupation, has no choice but to resist its occupiers. That resistance has continued for decades and will continue relentlessly as long as the occupation persists. In that regard, the Israeli attempts and propaganda are undoubtedly doomed to failure.

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

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland): With regard to Syria, Iceland welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), with the aim of ensuring access for humanitarian assistance to the people in need throughout Syria. We commend the non-permanent members Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg, which relentlessly worked towards building the consensus on the resolution that was long overdue.

However, humanitarian assistance can give only short-term relief. Much more needs to be done by the Security Council to seek a political solution to the conflict. The situation is already having significant consequences for regional peace and security and is affecting the situation in neighbouring countries, as well as the United Nations peacekeeping mission on the Syrian Golan. The Council cannot sit idly by.

In Syria, we have also been witnessing flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law for more than three years now, especially by the Syrian Government. We continue to condemn those violations and reiterate our call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I want to start by expressing Iceland's condemnation of the violations of international humanitarian law by both sides in the conflict. We condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other militant organizations in Gaza against civilian targets in Israel, which terrorize the civilian population and have so far resulted in two civilian deaths. We also condemn the use of force by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which has resulted in more than 600 deaths in Gaza, the vast majority of them civilians, and the injuring of more than 3,500 people, as well as immense destruction of homes and other civilian infrastructure. The IDF's air and ground assault raises concerns about respect for the principle of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attacks under international humanitarian law.

While the current situation in Gaza is more than tragic, I will not dwell on it, since the core problem is not what is happening today but the occupation. The occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, affects all aspects of the daily life of Palestinians and violates their human rights, including their freedom of movement and property rights, and their right to assembly, freedom of expression, education, health and equal access to justice and due process, to name a few.

In that respect, let us recall that this month it is 10 years since the issuance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in which the Court clearly states that the wall, where built on occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. However, contrary to the recommendations of the Court, not much has changed on the ground. The wall continues to obstruct the movement of Palestinians and to have a severe impact on their livelihood opportunities. Let us also recall that this summer the blockade on Gaza has been in place for eight years, with dire consequences for the civilian population.

We spend a great deal of time at the United Nations discussing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the importance of dialogue and mediation for peace and security and so on. Those concepts are not meant to be abstract. They do not exist in a vacuum. The whole idea is to apply them to real life situations. We therefore commend the Secretary-General for going to Israel and the State of Palestine to try directly to seek a ceasefire. We strongly encourage him to continue being personally engaged and to make full use of his good offices to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

The conflict also requires the urgent attention of the Security Council. First and foremost, a ceasefire that not only provides for laying down arms but also lays the ground for achieving something more sustainable must be agreed. Secondly, the Security Council must firmly uphold its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Every effort must be made to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict that results in two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The parameters are fairly clear and well known to all. The Council can start by demanding respect for its own numerous resolutions on the conflict and for international humanitarian law.

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

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing.

Israel is using all its land, naval and air military capability to humiliate the Palestinian people, who have now been besieged in Gaza for almost seven

years. The occupying Power is again demonstrating its barbarity and cruel nature through its actions against the Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including women, children and the elderly. That has claimed more than 600 lives, injured thousands of people and given rise to thousands of refugees. It has also led to the destruction of infrastructure in all sectors of activity.

Like many representatives, I ask myself a number of questions. How can we explain the fact that 70 per cent of the victims of the aggression, according to United Nations estimates, are civilians? How can one justify the murder of unarmed civilians under the pretext of protecting other civilians? What arguments can possibly be used to justify the targeting of medical teams and hospitals?

Israel is shedding Palestinian blood, which compounds the other acts of violence that have been inflicted on the Palestinian people for six decades. The consequences of that slaughter linger in the international consciousness. After the bloodbaths of Sabra and Shatila, Qana, Haifa, Jenin and elsewhere, this time it was the turn of the Shujaiya neighbourhood. The occupying forces attacked it using rockets and other ammunition, claiming 70 lives, the majority of which, as always, were women, children and the elderly.

How long will Israel continue its aggression against the Palestinian people? How long will it disregard international law? How long will the international community remain silent in the face of those acts, limiting itself to weakly condemning Israel while Palestinians are attacked on a daily basis in clear view of the entire world? How long will a representative of Palestine continue to read us lists of murdered innocent children? That list is, of course, horrendous.

Israel believes that it enjoys some sort of immunity that puts it above the law and allows it to violate people's rights wherever, whenever and however it wants to. It is not interested in the whole concept of being accountable for one's actions. The whole concept of criminal liability is what international law is based on and we are about to commemorate the World Day for International Justice. How can one use the pretext of the fight against terrorism to carry out crimes against Palestinians and to avoid any responsibility or liability?

It is important that the Council, as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, take measures to put an end to the aggression. The Security Council held its first meeting

(see S/PV.7214) on Israeli aggression against Gaza on 10 July, before the number of victims was more than just a few dozen. Following that meeting, the Council issued a press statement (SC/11472). That is not what the Palestinian people were waiting for. That statement was certainly not in keeping with Israel's actions, which undermine security throughout the region as a whole.

The situation has escalated significantly over the past week, especially since the bloodbath of Shujaiya. There are now over 500 victims. The Security Council met in consultations yet again on 20 July, but failed to take a firm position. Of course, some felt that this gave a green light to the occupation forces to continue their murder without being held responsible.

We reaffirm our condemnation of the Israeli aggression and the military ground operations launched by Israel against Gaza. The international community and the Security Council must first assume their responsibilities to put an immediate end to the military aggression against Gaza.

Secondly, there is a need to lift the unjust blockade on Gaza to put an end to the negative humanitarian, social and economic impacts resulting from it. Palestinians are deprived of their basic rights and their right to a decent life. We also call for an opening of the crossing points to ensure that the necessary humanitarian assistance is provided to the people of Gaza.

Thirdly, there is a need to mobilize the efforts of the international community to increase its delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestine. We must support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. For that reason, we have decided to send medical aid to the Gaza Strip and we have welcomed a number of Palestinians into our hospitals.

Fourthly, we should support the call of President Mahmoud Abbas to place the State of Palestine under an international protection regime.

Fifthly, there is a need to put an end to the attacks by Israel and Israeli settlers against the Palestinian people and their assets, property and religious holy sites. There is a need to begin an exchange of refugees and to put an end to the colonialist activities of Israel in Jerusalem and East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Sixthly, there is a need to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the pre-1967

borders, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the resolutions of international law, the concept of land for peace and the Madrid terms of reference.

We welcome the international and regional efforts and initiatives aimed at putting an end to the aggression against Gaza. We also welcome the activities undertaken within that framework. We reaffirm the importance of achieving a lasting and just truce that would avert renewed aggression by Israel against Gaza, and of lifting the blockade on Gaza.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting of the Security Council on the Middle East, in particular to consider the situation in the Gaza Strip arising from the brutal military attack by Israel, the occupying Power, on the people of the territory of the State of Palestine.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The international community is once again shaken by the escalation of violence caused by Israel's bloody military actions in Gaza. The severity of the conflict, which erupted a few days ago as a result of the military operations, requires the Security Council to make a resounding statement in the form of a resolution in favour of an immediate ceasefire in accordance with the agreement of November 2012, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Gaza and putting an end to the violence against the Palestinian people.

Our country categorically condemns the aggression perpetrated by the occupying Power, through indiscriminate bombing and the invasion of the territory, which has sown destruction, killed more than 500 innocent civilians, mostly children, women and the elderly, and wounded thousands of people, in clear violation of the norms of international law, including international humanitarian law.

Venezuela reiterates its solidarity with the Palestinian people and Government in the face of this new attack by the Israeli military forces, which has subjected the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip to an illegal embargo since 2007 and violated their human rights

and the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. We therefore demand that Israel put an end to this military aggression and the construction of settlements in the occupied territories of the Palestinian State, refrain from taking measures of collective punishment, and lift the suffocating blockade on the Gaza Strip, which has had an ongoing and devastating impact on the Palestinian people by deliberately depriving them of their means of subsistence, including economic income, food, medicine and other goods that are essential to the daily lives of its inhabitants and the functioning of their political institutions.

Finally, our country reiterates the need to return to the path of negotiations in order to achieve a broad peace founded on a vision of a region in which two States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with international law.

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

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador reaffirms its commitment to peace, unconditional respect for human rights, international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It also reiterates its hope that a peaceful solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine can be found.

El Salvador vigorously condemns and rejects the armed attacks by Israel against the Gaza Strip, which have increased during the past week and led to the loss of human lives, hundreds of wounded and the flight of thousands of Palestinians from their homes, as well as serious material damage.

El Salvador believes that the exercise of States' right to legitimate self-defence, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, does not justify the disproportionate use of military force against another State, and even less against its civilian population. That is not only a breach of the spirit of the Charter but also a flagrant violation of the norms of international humanitarian law.

We urge immediate, continuous, unrestricted and unhindered access for the people of Gaza to humanitarian assistance and basic supplies. In that regard, we are very optimistic about the meeting that the Human Rights Council will hold soon to assess the situation of civilians in the Gaza Strip.

El Salvador calls for the strict implementation of all of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly relating to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, which stress, inter alia, respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

On that basis, El Salvador reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of armed aggression and requests the Security Council to play a more active and central role in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict.

El Salvador calls for the full restoration of calm to pave the way to resolving all issues peacefully. We therefore support and urge the various actors that have been accompanying the parties in their quest for peaceful solutions to intensify their diplomatic actions in the short term and to give priority to the voice and rights of peoples in search of peace.

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

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity afforded us to take the floor.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada supports the right of Israel, like any other country, to defend itself against terror attacks. We stand unequivocally with Israel in its efforts to protect the lives of its citizens, which are once again under direct threat.

The indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza on Israel are terrorist acts, for which there can be no justification. The Council must condemn these reprehensible acts by Hamas and call for the restoration of calm and an end to the current hostilities. This is not a conflict between the Palestinian Authority or the Palestinian people and the State of Israel. It is a conflict between a terrorist organization and the Jewish State.

(*spoke in French*)

There is no moral equivalence between Hamas, a terrorist organization with a blatant disregard for human life, and the liberal democratic State of Israel, which is fulfilling its obligation to defend its people. Is there any Government represented in this Chamber that would not defend itself vigorously if hundreds of rockets were raining down on its people day after day?

The Israel Defense Forces have continued to demonstrate a commitment to minimizing civilian

casualties in response to the relentless rocket attacks. Hamas has sought to deliberately put civilians, from both sides, in mortal danger. We mourn the resulting deaths and deplore the suffering.

(*spoke in English*)

In early June, President Abbas announced a new Government that would reassert his authority over Gaza, until then firmly under the boot of Hamas. If there is something positive that might be derived from this tragedy, it should be the opportunity that it creates for President Abbas to take on three big challenges.

The first challenge is to complete the disarmament of Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups operating in Gaza, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This means that he must follow through on his commitment to demilitarization and the removal of existing stockpiles of thousands and thousands of largely Iranian-supplied missiles nestled and shielded amid the homes, grocery stores and schools of Palestinians. It means that Hamas fighters put down their arms and embrace the peace process.

Secondly, there must be a complete cessation of the production and smuggling of weapons and materials that enable terrorist groups to both acquire and make rockets.

Thirdly, the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus must assume immediate and total control of Gaza and the Rafah border crossing. There is no place for militias, private armies or alternative security forces. The principle of "one authority, one gun" must be enforced, and security coordination between the Palestinians and the Israelis should continue.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada supports the Secretary-General's efforts to de-escalate the situation as well as the efforts of the Governments of Egypt and the United States to attempt to broker a ceasefire. Canada commends Israel for its unconditional acceptance of the Egyptian ceasefire proposal, which was rejected by Hamas.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada expresses profound concern regarding the reports that rockets found in a Gaza school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were returned to Hamas. Canada unequivocally calls on the United Nations to launch an immediate independent investigation to

determine the facts surrounding the report. Canada also calls on the United Nations to ensure that no rockets are returned to Hamas in any way, shape or form.

Canada calls on Hamas and other terrorist groups to end the violence and suffering. It is in Hamas's power to end this conflict, and we call on it to do so immediately.

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

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): It is indeed with a heavy heart that we address today the unspeakable suffering, death and devastation of Palestinians wrought by the inhuman, indiscriminate, brutal and disproportionate military aggression and assault by a Member State that is not following the rule of law and international standards.

Prior to coming to this meeting, I glanced at a newspaper headline stating, "While hundreds of women and children are dying in Gaza, the global conscience is quiet", and it carried three pictures of three world leaders. One leader kept his eyes closed, another kept his ears shut and the third one kept his mouth shut. I hope that picture does not reflect a global leadership characterized by inactivity even as unarmed fellow human beings are being slaughtered mercilessly. I am surprised that the leaders that always teach us the value of human rights are now simply remaining quiet and keeping mum.

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate and allowing us to vent our frustration and helplessness. We know that this debate will not stop the brutality against innocent civilians in Palestine; however, it may speak to the moral, ethical and human rights values of the powerful. We feel better, at least, that history is not repeating itself. When the Jews were being mercilessly persecuted under the Nazis, hardly anyone raised their voice. Here we have been given a chance to raise our voice in frustration and also to convey our solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just cause.

The graphic and disturbing pictures of helpless Palestinians exposed to Israel's full-scale military onslaught greatly shock our conscience. We are no less pained to see the inaction and helplessness of the Security Council plus that of powerful leaders, yet some lip service is still better than nothing so as to give hope to those who are imprisoned in Gaza, where more than 600 innocent lives have been lost. Collateral

damage has turned vibrant Gaza City into a dustbin, destroying the water, sewerage and electricity systems as well as hospitals. It is no wonder that a group of young Americans of Philadelphia have urged conscious citizens to do their best to end the modern-day apartheid in Palestine.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs confirmed that four out of every five Palestinians killed during Israel's ongoing military offensive in Gaza have been civilians, including children, women and elderly. Is this not genocide?

We do not deny Israel's right to exist in peace or to self-defence. But we strongly condemn its practice of routinely killing innocent Palestinians under various pretexts. It is unfortunate that Israel has been using the pretext of self-defence to kill people living under its own occupation on a whim, with impunity and without consequences. Its practice of cleansing Palestinians from that sacred land under various pretexts must not be acceptable to any.

More importantly, the advocates who so vociferously champion the right of Israel to self-defence often forget that the poor Palestinians also have the right to live, not in the shadow of lurking death and perpetual occupation, but as normal human beings with equal dignity, freedom and security in peace, just like all Israelis and like all free people on the planet Earth. The occupation forces are trampling on that right every day. How long will the international community deliberately keep its eyes, ears and mouths shut and refuse to see, hear and speak about the tragedy daily unfolding in occupied Palestine?

Israel is currently attacking a population of 1.8 million that has no army, no navy, no air force, no mechanized military units, no command and control and no heavy artillery. Israel pretends that this indiscriminate slaughter is a war. But as celebrated journalist Chris Hedges puts it in his recent post on www.TruthDig.com, "only the most self-deluded supporter of Israel is fooled". The rockets fired at the Israeli civilian population—which we certainly do not support, but rather condemn—cannot remotely be compared to the 1,000-pound iron fragmentation bombs that have been dropped in large numbers on crowded Palestinian neighbourhoods; to the forced removal of some 400,000 Palestinians from their homes; to the wounding of more than 7,000 of them from missile attacks fired by sophisticated Israeli F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopters; or to the destruction of basic

infrastructure, as well as 100,000 homes, in the wake of indiscriminate aggression.

We condemn violence and destruction, and we urge the Council to do so as well. The disproportionate use of force against an unarmed civilian population is in breach of the Geneva Convention and international human rights and humanitarian laws.

Despite repeated calls for a ceasefire by the Secretary-General and a few other leaders, Israel has continued its ground offensive in Gaza, adding to the death and destruction. We urge the Security Council to adopt a binding resolution to enforce a ceasefire and immediately end the hostilities so that no more blood, whether Palestinian or Israeli, is shed. We express our sympathy and condolences to the families of the dead. The Security Council has a Charter responsibility and obligation to secure peace by ending aggression and addressing threats to peace. We hope that the Council will rise to the occasion and take effective measures to bring the bloodshed to an end.

In conclusion, as we have repeatedly said, there can be no military solution to this conflict. Military intervention, in particular the use of brute military force, often exacerbates instead of ameliorating the conditions for peace. Unfortunately, a political settlement of this protracted crisis is nowhere in sight. With the latest round of American mediation now dead and the Quartet road map in limbo for the past few years, it is incumbent on the Security Council to perform the role of honest broker. It is a pity that for the past 66 years, the Council has often hesitated to take concrete action, even when its own resolutions have been blatantly flouted when they could have meaningfully contributed to a fair resolution of the issue.

This culture of impunity must end and the rule of law and justice must prevail. We hope that the devastating escalation of violence can serve as a wake-up call for the Council to work vigorously to end Israel's military occupation and bring about the beginning of a two-State solution that guarantees the safety and security of the residents of both the State of Israel and Palestine, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, so that they may live side by side in peace and harmony.

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

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We fully support the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Security Council has convened yet another open debate on the Middle East without having made any progress on the path to peace. Far from improving, the situation has deteriorated. The main problem remains Israel's systematic aggression against Palestine, with the ensuing crimes committed against its people. In recent weeks, we have seen Israel, in grave violation of the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions and of human rights, step up its military attacks and the bombardment of civilian areas and targets, killing Palestinian civilians and destroying their homes and property, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Cuba vigorously condemns Israel's latest aggression against the people of Gaza. Israel is using its military and technological superiority to carry out a policy of collective punishment, with a disproportionate use of force that has killed innocent civilians and caused enormous material damage. The figures for Palestinian civilians are alarming. The number of dead is above 520 and the wounded number more than 3,500, many of them with after-effects they will endure for the rest of their lives.

We call on the international community to demand that Israel put an end to the latest escalation of violence. Only conversations on an equitable basis can lead to a just peace that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights and allow the definitive establishment of the State of Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Until the Security Council plays its designated role in defence of international peace and security and adopts concrete practical measures to ensure that Israel ends its aggression against the Palestinian people, it will continue to encourage the Israeli occupying force to persist in its arbitrary, expansionist and criminal policy and to act with impunity.

Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories is the main obstacle to achieving peace and a just, lasting, broad solution in the Middle East. Israel's behaviour deliberately flouts United Nations resolutions, threatens regional and international peace and security, and violates the human rights of an entire people. There will be no peace in the Middle East while those aggressions persist and until the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are taken into account.

The General Assembly took a historic decision when a majority of its members granted Palestine the status of a non-member observer State in the United

Nations. We reiterate our support for Palestine's accession to the United Nations as a full Member State. It is imperative to continue supporting the Palestinian people in its legitimate claim for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Palestinian people are suffering under the growing number of illegal Israeli settlements; the construction of an illegal wall that isolates whole communities and hinders the formation of the Palestinian State; Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes and the eviction of thousands of people; the difficult and agonizing reality faced by Palestinian prisoners; and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza Strip, which is exacerbated by the ongoing and unjust blockade of the area, as well as by nocturnal military air strikes, assassinations, kidnapping and torture. In recent weeks, the Israeli army has conducted hundreds of violent military raids on Palestinian homes in the West Bank, arresting and detaining hundreds of Palestinians who are being held along with thousands of others already in Israeli jails. Only the end of Israel's colonialist policy, the liberation of Palestinian prisoners and the lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip will allow for a meaningful political process capable of bringing peace to the region.

We reiterate that a political solution through dialogue and negotiations is the only alternative for the conflict in Syria. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria should be safeguarded, as well as the right of its people to self-determination without any foreign intervention or interference of any kind, including attempts to use the supposed protection of human lives as a pretext for foreign intervention.

We cannot but reiterate the concern produced by the loss of innocent lives as a result of the Syrian conflict, and our condemnation of all acts of violence. Cuba welcomes the successful conclusion of the operation for the destruction and withdrawal from Syrian territory of all chemical weapons under exceptionally difficult conditions.

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

Mrs. Chikava (Zimbabwe): At the outset, as this is the first time that I take the floor during your presidency of the Security Council, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of July and for the able manner in which you have conducted the business of the Council.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with the African Union decision adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Malabo in June.

I wish to convey deep sorrow and sincere condolences to the Palestinian people and their leadership on the tragic loss of life and the devastation they have suffered as a result of the indiscriminate and disproportionate acts of violence by the occupying force in the Gaza Strip. The senseless killing of civilians clearly constitutes deliberate reprisals and collective punishment against a whole civilian population, in serious breach of international humanitarian law.

Zimbabwe is extremely outraged at the ongoing bombardment, coupled with the ground invasion, against densely populated civilian areas, which is causing wanton destruction to vital civilian infrastructure and disrupting all aspects of life in Gaza, where people are already suffering under the illegal Israeli blockade.

Israeli Defense Forces actions in Gaza are unjustifiable under any pretext. Zimbabwe calls for an immediate halt to the violence. Israel should respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians.

Zimbabwe expresses grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip caused by widespread destruction and damage to civilian property. There is an urgent need to assist the Palestinian people through the provision of emergency aid and relief to meet the needs of vulnerable civilians. We call on the international community to provide emergency assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

It is unacceptable that the Israeli military violates the territorial integrity of Gaza and the human rights of the Palestinian people, killing hundreds and injuring thousands, while the Security Council fails to intervene decisively. The Security Council must uphold its Charter responsibilities and act to protect innocent Palestinian civilians. The international community must act in unison to stop Israel's relentless acts of collective punishment on the Palestinian people.

The ongoing injustice and culture of impunity by Israel must stop. The Security Council must hold Israel accountable for its actions and compel it to comply with international law. The collective failure of the Security

Council and the international community has fostered Israeli's flagrant violations of all Security Council resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict. We also call on Israel to stop the expansion of illegal settlements, to lift the blockade on Gaza and to return to the negotiating table.

We urge the Security Council to play a more active role to encourage the resumption of peace talks aimed at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the principles of international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions. Zimbabwe supports negotiations towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East leading to the restoration of the Palestinian people's legitimate right to establish an independent State co-existing peacefully with the State of Israel. There is no option to peaceful dialogue to achieve a two-State solution based on the June 1967 borders.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe reaffirms its unwavering support and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their quest to realize their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations for freedom, justice, dignity and peace.

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

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, in a conflict that could and should have been avoided. Yesterday, my Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John Key, made a motion in the New Zealand Parliament expressing that concern as well as grave concern at the appalling and unacceptable number of civilian casualties. The motion, which was adopted unanimously, also gave strong support to international efforts to obtain a ceasefire and to end hostilities so that both parties could return to negotiations.

It is clear that the parties have fallen short of their obligations to protect civilians, including through indiscriminate firing into civilian populations. That undermines basic precepts of acceptable international behaviour. The rapidly escalating toll in death and injury is, as my Prime Minister said, appalling and unacceptable. There is an urgent need for immediate steps to prevent further civilian casualties.

New Zealand urges all parties to take the necessary measures to protect civilians, including through further humanitarian pauses. There is also a need for

broader measures to alleviate the ongoing humanitarian situation on the ground. In particular, urgent assistance is required for overwhelmed medical services and for the unprecedented number of displaced civilians — people who, in the words of my Prime Minister, have nowhere to go — numbers that are already double those displaced during the 2009 crisis and are still growing rapidly.

To provide that urgent assistance, New Zealand has agreed, and will very shortly be advising of, a further financial contribution to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, thus responding to the Secretary-General's statement this morning urging that Member States do so.

Prime Minister Key said that New Zealand strongly supported international efforts to obtain an immediate ceasefire and joined the Council's continuing call for an end to hostilities, adding that New Zealand had been "deeply disappointed that, to date, ceasefire initiatives have failed". We urge all parties to continue efforts to de-escalate the situation.

The latest incidents reinforce the importance of a sustainable resolution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It should be clear to all now that a continuation of the status quo is untenable. New Zealand calls on both parties to return to the negotiating table to work towards a meaningful and permanent two-State solution. A credible political horizon is vital, including a sustainable end to the blockade of Gaza.

The pattern of conflict has gone on too long, and the cost to innocent civilians is just too high. The violence only sows more seeds of resentment and revenge, which will damage both sides and the wider international community. We will reap the product of what is now occurring in years to come.

In short, New Zealand endorses and supports the Secretary-General's plea this morning to stop the fighting, start the dialogue and tackle the causes of this conflict.

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

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, and the representative of Israel and the observer of the Observer State of Palestine for their statements.

We regret to note that, once again, the Gaza Strip is the scene of an armed confrontation that has caused many innocent victims among the civilian

population. We support the current efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, who has travelled to the region to obtain a cessation of hostilities. We support and appreciate the mediation efforts of other actors, especially Egypt and the United States, who have travelled to the region in order to reach a ceasefire.

Mexico reiterates its grave concern at the escalation of violence between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip, and emphatically calls on both parties to put an immediate end to all acts of aggression and violence. We condemn the firing of rockets and the use of force in the Gaza Strip, which has caused more than 500 deaths, more than 3,000 injured and thousands of displaced persons, primarily affecting the civilian population, including women and children. We are particularly concerned by evidence of attacks on hospitals and civilian housing, which are contrary to international humanitarian law.

We call on the parties to refrain from engaging in hostile actions that affect the Palestinian and Israeli populations, and demand that they respect the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, in particular those relating to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The status quo is not acceptable. It will only further exacerbate tensions and bring more violence and confrontation, directly affecting the civilian population and destabilizing the region.

Therefore, Mexico calls for compliance with resolution 1860 (2009), which contains the elements needed to address the factors that led to the current conflict, specifically the embargo imposed on the people who live in the Gaza Strip, which is unsustainable, unacceptable and counterproductive. We reiterate the need to resolve the underlying problem in the region as quickly as possible, thereby guaranteeing the rights of both Israel and Palestine to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. In that regard, we recognize the importance of promptly renewing direct talks between the two sides.

We call on the Security Council to fully assume its responsibilities and take all measures in its power to bring about a cessation of hostilities and provide humanitarian assistance and promote dialogue between stakeholders in order to restore trust between Israel and Palestine. Only then can a lasting peace be achieved in the region.

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

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important debate.

At the outset, I express my country's deepest condolences and profound sympathy for the indescribable human tragedy and senseless deaths among the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, most of whom are innocent women, children and the elderly, and the countless injured — all of whom are victims of a collective punishment.

I would like to express Kazakhstan's great concern at the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, where heavy, brutal air strikes and aggressive ground operations by the Israeli army have resulted in the deaths of more than 600 Palestinians, violating norms of international human rights and humanitarian laws. It is clearly evident that the persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to threaten regional and international peace and security, mainly aggravated by Israel. The rule of law has to be applied internationally, and it is the duty of the Security Council to enforce it and not fail in its obligations. In that context, we support Cairo's peace initiative as a framework to end the violence, and the efforts of the international community and the Secretary-General to broker a ceasefire and resume peace talks.

We recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their right to create an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, peacefully coexisting with Israel. We advocate for the Observer State of Palestine to obtain full-fledged membership in the United Nations, and we call on Israel to urgently end its illegal occupation and stop expanding settlements and the illegal separation wall — some of the key causes of the ongoing conflict.

We are convinced that Israel does not have the right to use its force the way it does on whatever pretext. We call on the Security Council to end this systematic aggression.

We regret that the prospects for a ceasefire are becoming bleak. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has deteriorated drastically. The human toll on the Palestinian side has increased dramatically, owing to the asymmetrical and disproportionate war. We also call for the lifting of the Israeli blockade on Gaza, which imposes severe and unbearable limitations. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon himself pointed out, this is an "atrocious action," stressing that "Israel must exercise maximum restraint and do far more to protect civilians."

We support the call of all Member States for an immediate ceasefire between the parties, a return to negotiations, and for de-escalating tensions, providing support for the grave humanitarian crisis and lifting Israeli restrictions on the movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza.

We are equally concerned about the increasing violence in Syria and the devastating humanitarian consequences. We call for the de-escalation of hostilities and the halting of aerial bombardment, and for mobilizing cross-border aid operations for hard-to-reach areas.

The various tensions elsewhere in the Middle East are destabilizing the region. We therefore urgently call on all parties to commit their political will to ensuring lasting peace and security, freedom and justice for all people through a genuine multilateral approach.

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

Mr. AlAjmi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab Group, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We are convinced that your wisdom and professionalism will enable you to manage the Council during this month with success. We would also like to congratulate your predecessor on his on his presidency last month.

We find ourselves gathered together again during this now regular meeting on the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. However, this time it is taking place in humanitarian circumstances that are far from routine. That reminds us of the tragic Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip at the end of 2009, which remains quite present in our collective memory. The blood of innocent victims, men, women, children, continues to flow. And the anguished cries persist of mothers who have lost children, the cries of pain of the injured, the despair of those who have been displaced, who have lost their shelters, their homes, all as a result of the Israeli bombardment.

Now we are again facing another episode of bloodthirsty and ever more aggressive Israeli collective punishment. Its bombardments resemble a sea of lava that cannot discriminate among an elderly woman baking bread, an elderly man praying or a student studying his lessons. The deadly Israeli machine is always proud to demonstrate its superiority, especially

its military superiority, when confronting an unarmed civilian population that is destitute as a result of the ongoing occupation and the asphyxiating blockade on the Gaza Strip. The Arab Group vigorously condemns the barbaric aggression and extreme violence against civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has again topped itself. This is one of the darkest pages in history, replete with violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law concerning civilians in armed conflict. Israel has outdone itself in carrying out ever more horrendous actions and escalating its military operations to a new level, as evidenced by the ground incursion subsequent to the air bombardments and the targeting of Palestinian beaches in the framework of its collective reprisals against the civilians under occupation. The result can be seen in the growing number of civilian victims — over 600, most of them women and children. Thousands have been wounded; tens of thousands have lost their homes, according to reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The crowning glory of this activity was the murderous action carried out in the Shujaiya neighbourhood. All these actions are war crimes.

We now find ourselves on the very brink of a humanitarian disaster as Israel pursues its nihilistic policy aimed at undermining all of the basic rights of the Palestinian people by rejecting the peace process; shattering the dreams of a people who have been deprived of the right to create a State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and ignoring all peace proposals, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

That is why the Arab Group has turned to the international community, represented by the Security Council, to request that it assume its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. As the Council is the guarantor and bulwark of the maintenance of international peace and security, it is requested, first, to push Israel to immediately and unconditionally put an end to its military aggression against the Gaza Strip and guarantee that such actions will never happen again, and force Israel to fully bear its legal responsibility for the damage caused by its barbaric aggression.

Second, the Council must condemn the racist actions of the Israeli occupation authorities and Israeli settlers against the Palestinians and their assets, including places of worship, and the violations of human rights and provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in times of war.

Third, it must work to lift the illegal blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and guarantee the opening of the crossing points to ensure access to humanitarian assistance.

Fourth, it must back Egypt's initiative of 14 June calling for a ceasefire and requesting all relevant players to abide by it and guarantee all underlying conditions.

Fifth, it must place the Palestinian territories under international protection to ensure Palestine's enjoyment of its territorial integrity and legitimate sovereignty.

Sixth, it must call upon Israel to unconditionally release all Palestinian prisoners held since the beginning of the current aggression, especially those under administrative detention without charge, which clearly contravenes existing law.

Seventh, it must provide the necessary assistance to the Palestinian State to ensure its capacity to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people and to rebuild the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms its commitment to and solidarity with the Lebanese Republic and its support for its territorial integrity and security. We demand that Israel end its repeated violations of Lebanese territory and air space, completely withdraw from the occupied Lebanese territories and respect the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

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

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): My delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for convening this important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. We thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive briefing. Viet Nam highly appreciates his efforts to reduce tensions in the area.

Viet Nam aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we meet today, hundreds of Palestinians, many of them women and children, have been killed in the latest indiscriminate attacks against the population of Gaza. Thousands of people have been displaced, years of social and economic gains have again been undone, and hope for peace in the region has once again been shattered. Viet Nam is extremely concerned over the escalation of violence and strongly deplores the

unacceptable level of civilian casualties. We endorse Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks on the atrocious action in Gaza and join him and others in calling on Israel to cease the violence against and take action to protect the Palestinian civilians.

We call for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the violence against civilians and a resumption of negotiations between the parties concerned. We call for intensified efforts by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Quartet, to achieve such a ceasefire and address the current political and humanitarian crisis, including the facilitation of humanitarian relief in Gaza. We extend our full support to those and any other efforts of the international community aimed at bringing peace and stability to the region.

The cycle of violence has plagued and will continue to plague the region unless a just and peaceful solution is found to the almost seven-decade-long Palestinian question, as well as to the broader conflict in the Middle East. In that regard, Viet Nam supports efforts towards the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution that will ensure the legitimate interests of all parties concerned. Urgent and decisive actions are now needed to resume direct talks between Israel and Palestine and the broader Middle East peace process. Viet Nam once again reaffirms its principled support for the two-State solution, including the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine existing in peace with the State of Israel.

While such a resolution to the Palestine-Israel conflict would have a profound impact on the Middle East, peace in the region also requires forward movement on the other crises. We are deeply troubled by the recent rise of violence in Iraq and support the efforts of the international community and the Iraqi Government to restore stability and secure the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the interests of peace and stability in the region. We are also concerned about the situation in Syria, and call on all parties to refrain from the use of force and to settle disputes through peaceful negotiations to bring stability to Syria and avoid any civilian casualties.

Peace in the Middle East can be achieved only if Palestinians are guaranteed a better life and their fundamental rights, including the sacred right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State. We also share the Secretary-General's view that both Palestinians and Israelis need to feel a sense of security and to see a horizon of hope. The root causes of the conflict must therefore be addressed. The only way to do that is through peaceful negotiations.

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

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the convening of this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing on the reality on the ground and for his good offices in the region.

My country is following very closely the current situation in the Gaza Strip. We have expressed our concern about the escalating violence and our strong condemnation of the ground incursion by the Israeli army into the Gaza Strip, which further aggravates the situation on the ground, and of the firing of rockets into Israel. We therefore demand the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the immediate cessation of rocket fire against Israel.

Peru condemns the attacks on densely populated urban areas and the disproportionate use of military force. We therefore reiterate our call for the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law and for immediate measures to protect the civilian population, ensuring medical care for victims and the opening of border crossings to facilitate the evacuation of the civilian population.

Peru reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of hostilities. To that end, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General and the other initiatives, such as those of Egypt, to achieve a ceasefire. We also agree with the statements of those who spoke before me that point out the need to address the root causes of the conflict. That requires the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties to achieve a viable and lasting solution that puts an end to the status quo and enables the Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace within two States with secure and internationally recognized borders.

For the third time in the past six years, we have seen hostilities in the Gaza Strip. It is therefore essential to put a permanent end to the recurring cycle of that bloody conflict. My delegation believes that the international community, including actors with greater influence over the parties, should support the pursuit of a lasting peace on the basis of full compliance with the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map and the other agreements and full respect for international law, including the Security Council resolutions on the issue.

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

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important open debate today. Jamaica is deeply concerned about the escalating crisis in Gaza, which has resulted in rising civilian casualties, claiming the lives of more than 600 Palestinians and injuring in excess of 3,700 people, many of whom are women and children.

We strongly condemn the targeting of civilian populations, which constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. While acknowledging that Israel has legitimate security concerns and recognizing its right to self-defence, we are dismayed at the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force against an unarmed civilian population that has limited options for shelter. We also condemn the actions of Hamas and call for an urgent end to its ongoing rocket attacks on Israeli cities and population centres.

The Security Council and the wider international community cannot remain a bystander to those tragic events. The focus of the international community must be on brokering an immediate cessation of hostilities, even as we redouble our efforts to bring humanitarian relief to those thousands under siege within the dense confines of the Gaza Strip. We cannot turn a blind eye to the unfolding and mounting humanitarian catastrophe. We call on the international community to respond to the appeal made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for \$115 million to be mobilized in order to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza for food, water, medicine and sanitation services. The generous contribution of \$47 million by the United States is most welcome.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's visit to the region and greatly appreciate the briefing from Ramallah that he provided this morning, in which

he outlined the intense discussions in which he is currently engaged. Those discussions are geared towards a cessation of the fighting, the commencement of dialogue and tackling the root causes of the crisis.

Jamaica believes that the cycle of violence will continue in the absence of a negotiated political settlement on the basis of a two-State solution. We remain committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive agreement that recognizes the Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and guarantees the security of Israel. Achieving such a solution must be based on the implementation of confidence-building measures by both sides.

We have a collective responsibility to address those deep-rooted problems, which is the only pathway to achieving sustainable peace and security in the region.

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

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your leadership and your work as President of the Security Council during this particularly busy month. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing this morning.

When Guatemala took its seat on the Council in January 2012, the shadows of the emerging conflict in Syria and the long-standing tensions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority were somewhat eased by the hope sown in the region by the so-called Arab Spring. Although we remain confident that the legitimate demands of the peoples will ultimately produce results, for now there is only despair. Every week, the violence escalates, divisions increase and the humanitarian disaster grows. Our grief only increases with the addition of the recent events in the Gaza Strip to the situation in Syria, the situation in Iraq, its impact on neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, and the sudden rise in the activities of jihadists from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Despite what I have just said, Guatemala remains steadfast in maintaining that diplomacy and dialogue are the best way to achieve a long-term solution in each of the conflicts that undermines the Middle East. While the extent of the current intransigence and hostilities could suggest that it is naive, we continue to believe that political solutions to the disputes that have divided the region for years are the only way to achieve lasting

stability and the possibility of returning to the path of progress.

For example, what is on everyone's mind, for the central role it plays in the region, is the escalating violence in Israel and the Gaza Strip. Again the civilian population is threatened; once again we are faced with clashing narratives with regard to the origin of violence. While the recriminations cross and shares of responsibility are assigned, that which it is found, with amazement and horror, is the high cost that events have left, especially for the defenceless Palestinian civilian population. Not only do we deeply deplore the material and human losses occurred, but we are convinced that such actions will bring about a further escalation of the conflict, together with unpredictable consequences for both parties.

In that context, we join our voice to the urgent calls from various sectors for an immediate cessation of all acts of violence and reiterate that the only lasting solution must be sought in a negotiation on the basis of two States, Israel and Palestine, living in peace and under secure borders.

We are aware of the enormous challenges that a political solution may entail for the parties, both nationally and internationally. However, we insist that it is the only way left. Continuing along the present course will only deepen divisions, preventing the desired goal of peace.

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

Mr. Nitzan (Israel): Throughout the course of today, a number of Member States have used their time before the Security Council to criticize Israel. In truth, they deserve the criticism. They sit in this Chamber and pour out their rage and grief, when in fact many of those same nations are responsible for much of the conflict inflaming the Middle East.

I am glad to see that the representative of Lebanon has shown such an interest in Palestinian rights. However, before speaking about Israel in this Chamber, might I suggest that she take a look at the refugee camps throughout Lebanon, where Palestinians are kept in some of the worst conditions in the region? They are constantly subject to violence, extreme discrimination and economic and social oppression.

Earlier today, we heard from the odd couple of the United Nations — Iran and Saudi Arabia. Back home

they are fighting a proxy war in Syria, responsible for the killing of 150,000 Syrians, but here at the United Nations they could not be closer. They have one thing in common — both are cradles of terrorism and radicalism in the Middle East, one created Hizbullah and the other created Al-Qaida.

Iran and Qatar have also teamed up to arm and finance Hamas. Every rocket flying out into Israel could bear the imprint “Courtesy of Tehran”, while every terror tunnel could have a sign that reads “Made possible through a kind donation from the Amir of Qatar”.

If it were not enough that they enabled the building of an underground terror network, those nations sit here in the Council and deliver remarks that have no grounding in reality. In his remarks, the representative of Iran actually used the term “compliance” and called for the implementation of United Nations resolutions. Given that it is the world’s primary sponsor of terrorism, that it now has six nuclear weapons in clear violation of Security Council resolutions, and that it is smuggling arms into Gaza in clear violation of Security Council resolutions, I was not aware that Iran was actually familiar with the term “compliance”.

Finally, in that list of Member States, Egypt also had a lot to say about human rights. Given that it sentenced 683 Egyptians to death in a single day, instead of calling for divestments Egypt’s time would

be better spent making investments in its own people. Come to think of it, the same goes for all repressive Arab nations and the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement here in this Chamber — Cuba, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — great democracies — the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea — that brutally and mercilessly suppress the rights of their people. It is time to end the hypocrisy.

Once again, this war in Gaza is not one we chose. It was our last resort. It was imposed on us by Hamas, by its brutal attacks on our civilians. Israel did not want this war, and three times — three different times — Israel agreed to accept a ceasefire, and every single time Hamas refused and launched even more rockets. Each of those rockets sends a clear, loud message — Hamas is determined to wage war.

As we have said before, Israel has no interest in being in Gaza. We are fighting in Gaza, but we are not fighting the people of Gaza. The equation, once again, is very simple. When it is quiet in Israel, it will be quiet in Gaza. The goal of our operation is to eliminate the rockets, shut down the terror tunnels and demilitarize Gaza in order to restore sustained quiet for the people of Israel and the people of Gaza.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.