



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9439th meeting

Monday, 16 October 2023, 6 p.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Mr. França Danese (Brazil)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

The President: The representative of the United Arab Emirates has asked for the floor.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I appreciate the late turnout and the late hour. However, we would like to suggest that we suspend the meeting briefly to go into closed consultations on the votes before us.

The President: In the absence of objection, I shall now suspend the meeting to go into closed consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 6.15 p.m. and resumed at 7.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Türkiye, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen 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 the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/772, submitted by Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): From the very beginning, Russia has been calling on the Security Council to respond to the unprecedented exacerbation of the current crisis. Unfortunately, for five days, there has been no movement in that direction.

We underscore once again that we condemn what happened on 7 October and the deaths of Israeli civilians, as well as the deaths of civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Given that the number of killed and wounded is increasing by the hour, we could not wait any longer, as precious time was being wasted with the repetition of the same discussions or the inaction of the Security Council, and on Friday, 13 October, we put forward the brief and purely humanitarian draft resolution S/2023/772 for consideration by the Council. Its main element was a call for an immediate, lasting and fully respected humanitarian ceasefire. As Council members well understand, humanitarian efforts will not be possible without a ceasefire. Moreover, our draft resolution provides for condemning all violence and all terrorist attacks, the opening of humanitarian corridors and the safe release of all hostages.

I emphasize that almost no fundamental well-argued objections by Security Council members with regard to the initiative we proposed have been put forward. Only one delegation objected in general terms, and that objection did not concern the substance of the draft resolution.

On Saturday, 14 October, we asked the presidency to schedule a vote on our draft resolution for 16 October, and we opened the document for co-sponsorship by United Nations Member States. We thank the delegations that co-sponsored our draft resolution. It is telling that our draft resolution has been co-sponsored by many members of the Group of Arab States, in addition to other countries, and that Palestine also expressed its support for the draft resolution.

This is a purely humanitarian text, and we will not understand if any delegation decides not to support it for exclusively selfish geopolitical reasons.

We call on the members of the Security Council to support our draft resolution.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates

Against:

France, Japan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Malta, Switzerland

The President: The draft resolution received 5 votes in favour, 4 against and 6 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret that the Security Council has once again been held hostage to the selfish aspirations of the bloc of Western delegations. That is the only reason that it has been unable to send a clear, strong and unified message aimed at de-escalation. We are talking about the largest outbreak of violence in the Middle East in decades. The entire world was waiting with bated breath today for the Security Council to take decisive steps to stop the bloodshed, but Western delegations dismissed those expectations.

We believe that the voting in the Council today is extremely revealing. It has clearly demonstrated who is truly in favour of an immediate truce, an end to the indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip and the unconditional provision of humanitarian aid to the area's population, and who continues to block a unified voice from the Council in the pursuit of narrow political goals. No one should harbour any illusions, based on the results of the voting and the comments that will follow.

We believe that regardless of the outcome involving the draft resolution (S/2023/772) that we submitted, it has nevertheless fulfilled its mission of contributing to starting a substantive discussion of the reaction to this matter in the Security Council. Had we not taken the initiative, unfortunately, the discussion would probably have been limited to idle talk. We are extremely concerned about the unprecedented scale of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip and the elevated risk of the spread of the conflict.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Just over a week ago, terror was unleashed on Israel by Hamas, whose stated purpose is to destroy Israel and kill Jews. That was the worst massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. I want to say that once again: that was the worst massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. It was an appalling human tragedy that has brought to the surface the painful scars left by a millennium of anti-Semitism. Hamas terrorists slaughtered more than 1,000 civilians, including American citizens — entire families, children, babies and the elderly. And Hamas took innocent people hostage, including American citizens and the citizens of several members of the Security Council. The brutality of Hamas brings to mind the most heinous atrocities committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. And Hamas' actions have led to the dire humanitarian crisis facing the people of Gaza. Civilians should not have to suffer for Hamas' atrocities.

The Council and the entire international community have a responsibility to help address the humanitarian crisis, unequivocally condemn Hamas and reaffirm Israel's inherent right to self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations. Unfortunately, Russia's draft resolution (S/2023/772) submitted today does not meet all those responsibilities. Russia's draft resolution, which was put forward without any consultations, makes no mention of Hamas — none. By failing to condemn Hamas, Russia is giving cover to a terrorist group that brutalizes innocent civilians. It is outrageous, it is hypocritical and it is indefensible.

The United States could not support Russia's draft resolution, which, in ignoring Hamas' terrorism, dishonours victims. We agree that the Council should take action, but we have to get it right. And we will work intensively with all members on the Council to do so.

The vast majority of families in Gaza are suffering through no fault of their own. As I have said, Hamas set the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in motion, and we cannot allow the Council to unfairly shift the blame to Israel and excuse Hamas for its decades of cruelty. As we speak, Secretary Blinken and the White House are engaged in intensive discussions with the highest levels of the Israeli Government and other countries in the region to secure the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and facilitate humanitarian access and relief. We are also actively engaged with other partners in the region and the United Nations to help meet the needs of people in Gaza.

It is critical that civilians have access to essential food, water, medicine and shelter. Let me repeat: it is critical. We have called on countries in the region to allow for and facilitate full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access in Gaza, in line with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The United States is proud to be the largest international humanitarian donor to the Palestinian people. The United States announced yesterday the appointment of Special Envoy David Satterfield, who will lead United States diplomatic efforts to promote the safety of civilians and urgently address the humanitarian crisis, in coordination with the United Nations and United States partners. We are doing all we can to help facilitate access to basic necessities, including food, water and medicine.

As President Biden made clear, we are working with Israel to ensure that it has what it needs to defend the Israeli people, rescue hostages and take the necessary action to hold terrorists accountable for the attacks. The United States has reiterated to its Israeli partners the need to protect civilian life, consistent with international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians and the protection of people who are trying to get to safety must be a central focus for everyone involved. We will continue to urge our Israeli partners to work to minimize the risk of civilian casualties. The bottom line is this: you cannot claim to stand with the Palestinians and their legitimate aspirations if you do not stand squarely against Hamas. Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's rights to dignity and self-determination. The path of terror that Hamas is engaged on has not improved the life of a single person or done anything to advance peace and stability. On the contrary, all Hamas has ever brought to the Palestinian people and the region is misery, chaos and destruction.

Over the coming days, weeks and months, let us work together to prevent the conflict from spreading and to address the humanitarian crisis. Let us also work together to hold Hamas accountable for its terrorist acts against Israel and for standing in the way of the peace and stability that Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): We voted against the draft resolution (S/2023/772), not mainly for its contents. Of course, the draft resolution could have been improved if it had put forward a larger context and perspective, and we are second to none in caring about the humanitarian situation on the ground. We are second to none in caring about the humanitarian situation on the ground.

We are second to none in caring about the human rights of Palestinians and of Israelis. Our track record of cooperation in the country shows that. However, we voted against the draft resolution because of the way the draft resolution was handled. We still do not understand why the Russian Federation insisted on putting the draft resolution to the vote when there was a chance for further engagement by which we could have avoided showing the disunity of the Council. That is something we have witnessed today, and I do not think it is helpful to anyone. I think we have to make clear — and we have to recall — that the draft resolution is not an end in itself. We must have a united resolution that could really deliver things on the ground to help the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, that was not the case. That is why we voted against the draft resolution.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is outraged at Hamas terror attacks in Israel and supports Israel's right to self-defence in line with international law. We are also working urgently to respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We voted against the draft resolution (S/2023/772) put forward by the Russian delegation. We cannot support a draft resolution that fails to condemn Hamas terror attacks. As my Prime Minister said earlier today, Hamas actions were an existential strike at the very idea of Israel as a safe homeland for the Jewish people. It is unconscionable for the Council to ignore the largest terror attack in Israel's history. We remain clear, too, that all possible measures on the ground must be taken to ensure civilian casualties are minimized and to facilitate humanitarian aid. The gravity of the situation requires serious Council discussion. This draft resolution and this process were not serious attempts to find Council consensus, so we look forward to continuing consultations on the basis of the presidency's proposals.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta abstained in the voting on the draft resolution (S/2023/772). The text proposed by the Russian Federation left out important elements that also need to be recognized and addressed by the Council. While fully cognizant of the dire need for humanitarian relief to reach the people of Gaza without further delay, Malta notes that the text excludes crucial elements that are currently having an impact on the situation on the ground. We believe that those also need to be addressed.

We reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on Israel. We understand that Israel has the right to live in peace and security. It has the right to self-defence, but always in line with humanitarian and international law and in accordance with the principles of distinction and proportionality. With complete understanding of the urgency of the issue, Malta remains determined to engage in a constructive manner on the way forward. We stress the need for the Council to take action on the situation, which is of grave concern.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In my statement, I will refer to the draft resolution on which we have just voted (S/2023/772).

My delegation regrets that the Russian Federation has presented to the Security Council for its consideration a draft resolution that was not the subject of a process of negotiation and that consequently reflects only the position of the proposing State. We were surprised to see the text in blue despite the requests of several members of the Council for an extension to the time for negotiations when it was clear that there were still unresolved concerns and when the President of the Council at the same time was seeking to incorporate the points of view of all members of the Council in a common text, pursuant to a collective appeal made at our meeting on Friday.

It has been rightly noted that there are two inseparable dimensions of the unfolding tragedy. However, the draft resolution of the Russian Federation does not mention, much less condemn, the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas, which were the immediate cause of the escalation of violence and the resulting humanitarian crisis. Nor does it contain any mention of international humanitarian law and the obligation to respect that law. The urgency and seriousness of the situation cannot in any way be used to score short-lived political or media victories. The Council should adopt resolutions that seek to put an end to the human suffering in a serious and constructive manner. In addition, we note that all elements of the text of the Russian Federation's draft resolution were addressed in the draft resolution negotiated by the Brazilian presidency and that they continue to be the subject of consultations.

For those reasons, we abstained in the voting on the draft resolution presented by the Russian Federation.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Since 7 October, Switzerland has firmly condemned the acts of terror, indiscriminate attacks and taking

of hostages carried out by Hamas against the Israeli population. We deplore the deaths of thousands of civilians, including hundreds of children, in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in Gaza, and we express our most sincere condolences to their loved ones and to those of the staff members of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations who died in the line of duty. We commend the courage of their colleagues, who remain engaged in a large-scale humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have had to evacuate their homes and, like the rest of the people of Gaza, are currently in an extremely precarious situation, without protection and without access to essential services or external assistance.

Switzerland shares the sense of urgency and great concern, and therefore highlights the need for the Council to act in unison, given the situation in the Middle East. As the Secretary-General reminded us, the de-escalation, the protection of civilians, the release of all hostages and the delivery of humanitarian assistance are priorities. With those priorities in mind, Switzerland nevertheless chose to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution submitted by Russia. As we reiterate at every opportunity and in particular in the context of large-scale humanitarian crises, Switzerland believes that the Council cannot forgo, even in emergencies — or above all in emergencies — making a clear reference to international humanitarian law.

Even armed conflicts have rules. For Switzerland, the omission of a clear reference to international humanitarian law in a draft resolution of the Security Council when the situation involves an armed conflict is simply unacceptable. It is up to the Council to make respect for international humanitarian law a priority by calling on all parties to respect the basic rules concerning the conduct of hostilities, humanitarian access, the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure, humanitarian operations and personnel.

Calls for respect for international humanitarian law must also help curb a spiral of violence that could engulf the entire region. That is why we will remain actively and constructively engaged with a view to ensuring that reminders of the basic rules of international humanitarian law are given an appropriate place in the alternative proposal submitted by your delegation Mr. President. I take this opportunity to thank you for the immense work already done to build consensus among Council members. We are aware of the great effort of compromise that remains to be accomplished

in order to resolve the outstanding issues and hope that the Council can quickly unite its efforts in order to adopt a draft resolution to that effect. We are counting on the constructive engagement of all Council members.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This new round of conflict between Palestine and Israel continues to escalate and has already caused heavy civilian casualties and a humanitarian crisis. A spillover effect is impacting regional peace and stability. China is deeply concerned about that. We condemn all acts that harm civilians and oppose any violation of international law. We support the Security Council in playing a responsible role and support all efforts aimed at facilitating the de-escalation of the conflict and the restoration of peace. We welcome all initiatives that are conducive to protecting civilians and easing the humanitarian crisis. Based on that position, we voted in favour of the draft resolution that was put to the vote (S/2023/772).

In the light of this grave situation, China calls for the fighting to be brought to an end as soon as possible, preventing its endless spread and avoiding any further deterioration of the situation. Military means are not the way forward. Violence in response to violence will lead only to an endless vicious cycle. China calls on the relevant countries to take an objective and just position and to apply the brakes so that we can avoid a large-scale conflict and humanitarian disaster and avoid causing an even bigger blow to regional and international security. In view of the gravity of this situation, China calls for the observance of international humanitarian law and for sparing no effort to ensure the security of civilians. The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a red line under international humanitarian law. Civilians should not be the target of military operations. The indiscriminate use of force is unacceptable. The maintenance of one's own security cannot come at the expense of harming innocent civilians. The safety of United Nations staff and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. China supports diplomatic and mediation efforts so that the hostages can be released at an early date.

In the light of this grave situation, China calls for the opening of a humanitarian relief corridor as soon as possible to avoid a more serious humanitarian disaster. We are seriously concerned about the consequences of Israel's imposition of a full siege on Gaza and its order of emergency evacuation of the population in northern Gaza. We hope that Israel heeds the appeals

of the international community and resumes the water, electricity and fuel supply to Gaza and stops the collective punishment of the people there. We support the opening of a humanitarian corridor at an early date so that food, medicine and other humanitarian relief supplies can be delivered in a timely and smooth manner. We appreciate the efforts in that regard by Egypt and the other countries concerned. At the same time, China calls on the international community to increase its input to, and support for, United Nations humanitarian agencies continuing their work in Gaza. China will provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Gaza through the United Nations and via bilateral channels.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and should play its due role in resolving the current crisis. It is also the shared expectation of the international community that the Council will reach consensus as soon as possible and adopt real measures. In the past few days, Council members have been in close communication on the Palestine issue and situation. The draft resolution proposed by Russia demonstrates the overall direction of the Council's focus on humanitarian concerns and the protection of civilians, and it was co-sponsored by many countries, including Arab countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar.

We greatly regret the fact that the Council failed to agree on the draft resolution. Humanitarian issues should not be politicized. The protection of civilians should be a priority for all parties. In its previous dealings with regard to complex issues, the Council has usually started with a humanitarian initiative. The current conflict is spreading and suffering is continuing. The Council should not give up its effort in that regard. Brazil has also proposed a draft resolution. We welcome that. We hope that all parties, in a responsible and constructive spirit, will continue to seek consensus and take more actions to ease the tension and avoid a humanitarian disaster, thereby demonstrating sincerely the responsibility and mission of the Security Council and ensuring that it is able to meet this test of its morality and conscience.

The President of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, has highlighted on many occasions that the fundamental way to resolve the Palestine question is to establish an independent State of Palestine. History has time and again proven that, for the Israel-Palestine situation, the repeated outbreak of crisis is fundamentally due to the

fact that the basis of the two-State solution continues to be eroded, the Middle East peace process has veered off the right track and relevant United Nations resolutions have not been effectively implemented. When dealing with this new round of conflict between Palestine and Israel, the international community must transcend the piecemeal, case-by-case crisis management model, persevere in the fundamental direction of the two-State solution and make greater efforts towards a comprehensive and lasting solution to the question.

Since the outbreak of the crisis, China has actively conducted efforts to facilitate the easing of tensions and has actively promoted peace talks. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wang Yi, has communicated extensively with all relevant parties to elaborate China's policy and position. The Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East will visit countries of the region this week to conduct mediation work. China will always stand on the side of peace, justice and international law. We are ready to work with the international community to make unremitting efforts to stop the fighting in Gaza at an early date, achieve the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel and establish lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon voted in favour of a draft resolution (S/2023/772) that calls for a humanitarian ceasefire, firmly condemns the violence and hostilities targeted at civilians and acts of terrorism, calls for the unconditional release of hostages and for unfettered access to humanitarian assistance for the civilian population that needs it. We are convinced that it is an action that responds to the immeasurable despair and an extremely serious crisis, which in the space of a few days has caused thousands of deaths and immeasurable human distress. It is an action that, following our strong condemnation of the barbaric attacks against Israel on 7 October, is in line with our obligations under international humanitarian law.

We regret that the Council was not able to reach a consensus on the draft resolution. We must certainly show greater commitment in finding a just response to the humanitarian distress that is in line with our mandate. We must demonstrate greater commitment to silencing the guns and determining responsibility. We must demonstrate greater commitment to finding a lasting solution commensurate with the severity of the humanitarian situation, which must be addressed by the Security Council if we are to avoid a catastrophe with irreparable consequences.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): Long before the unjustifiable Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, Gaza was already one of the most desperate places on Earth to live. All Council members have rightly condemned the indiscriminate murder of innocent Israeli civilians and the taking hostage of 199 people, including children. We reiterate that condemnation here. But Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people or the people of Gaza who are suffering immensely today.

That is why Council unity is so desperately needed on this file. In January, the United Nations assessment of humanitarian needs in Gaza stated that 1.3 million people required aid for their basic survival. Half of those were children, and almost 60 per cent of the need ranged between severe and catastrophic. In the past decade alone, Gazans have lived through three rounds of major conflict. The children of Gaza have lost hope.

That nightmare was Gaza's lot 10 months before this outbreak. Today civilians in Gaza are once again facing a ruinous war with nowhere safe to go. Gaza, one of the most densely populated places on Earth, is besieged, with no access to fuel, electricity, food, water or medical supplies. Two million people are now relying on a solitary pipeline for water, as none of the three desalinating plants can operate without power.

Against that terrible backdrop, the international community must recognize that the call for the evacuation of more than 1 million people, who have nowhere safe to go and no assistance, for what it is — an unjustified demand, unmeetable in its nature. The Council must therefore do more than just make statements. At a minimum, the Council should be able to come together around the need to protect all civilians and to ensure the unconditional release of all hostages and the safe provision of humanitarian assistance. Access to fuel, food, water, medical aid and other basic necessities must be fully restored. We must create a framework for rapid, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access for the brave workers who are risking their lives today on the ground.

The call for humanitarian ceasefires is essential for the realization of all of the above. Draft resolution S/2023/772, put forward by the Russian delegation, responds to those specific humanitarian needs. That is why the United Arab Emirates voted in favour of it, and that is why we are disappointed that it could not command the support of the Council today. We thank

the presidency for its efforts, and we hope that we will be able to come together quickly and with one voice on this file for those who so desperately need it on the ground.

We believe the Council should be able to find unity on three things — international humanitarian law must be upheld, indiscriminate attacks must be rejected and are unjustifiable and the cycle of violence overall must end. The events of the past nine days have made it painfully clear that without a determined political horizon, the spectre of bloodshed will continue to haunt both Israelis and Palestinians. Mahmoud Darwish, the late Palestinian poet, once wrote that a life defined only by the absence of its antithesis — death — is no life at all. Palestinians and Israelis deserve not only to live, which is the bare minimum, but to thrive side by side in their own independent, prosperous and secure States.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): The day of 7 October 2023 will remain a dark day — not only for the Israelis and its people, but for the entire world. With its monstrous terrorist acts, Hamas has committed the irreparable. Its appalling crimes have traumatized Israelis; they have terribly and profoundly hurt the entire nation; and they have defied our human conscience. They remain unjustifiable and unacceptable. They do not represent any nation or religion, and they cannot support any cause.

Albania recognizes the severity and urgency of the situation on the ground. We recognize the need for the Council to react and act in discharging its core responsibility in many respects — in strongly condemning terrorism, as it has always done; in recognizing the right of States to defend themselves, as inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations; in always, protecting civilians; in supporting humanitarian efforts; in avoiding further exacerbation or any spillover of an already tense, complex and dangerous situation; and in chartering a clear path for peace, security, progress and dignity for all Israelis and Palestinians.

We abstained in the voting on draft resolution S/2023/772 because the text presented failed to present the full picture and to incorporate core elements on substantial issues. We remain hopeful that there is room to continue to remain actively engaged, with the hope to use our time and energy in the best way possible in order to come together to respond to the many urgent and pressing needs on the ground. This critical situation does not need competing texts or protagonism between Member States. It requires active diplomacy by regional

and international actors, as is happening now. Here in the Council, it requires engagement by all, in good faith, to come together to respond in the best possible way to all critical imperatives and needs on the ground.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): The terrorist attack carried out on the 7 October by Hamas is, without a doubt, the worst such attack experienced by Israel since its creation. In this difficult time, France stands by Israel. Israel's security is non-negotiable. Israel has the clear right to defend itself.

Given the current crisis, urgent humanitarian assistance for Gaza is critical. The protection of civilians is imperative. Everyone must respect the Geneva Conventions. The Palestinian population of Gaza is also a victim of Hamas.

France voted against draft resolution S/2023/772, submitted by Russia, because it lacked several essential elements. France would like the Council to now unite behind the draft resolution submitted by the Brazilian presidency and to agree to condemn this terrorist attack, ensure humanitarian assistance and protect the civilian population of Gaza. Today more than ever, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): For 10 days, the Security Council has been watching Israel assault more than 2 million Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. People are being killed, injured, displaced and terrorized. Israel has not spared a single Palestinian family in Gaza. No one should forget that these are human lives, that Palestinian lives matter too, and no one should entertain the illusion that killing more Palestinians will ever make Israelis more secure.

Israel has besieged the Gaza Strip for 17 years, has launched repeated aggressions against our people there. Did it make it more secure? How can it convince anyone that killing more innocent Palestinians, children, women, men, old and young, is the answer? I have come to the Council many times with that message. The Palestinian people no longer believe help is on the way. Prove them wrong; restore hope in collective action. The Council now has important decisions to make — decisions that will determine what the coming days will look like for the Palestinian people, for the region and for the entire world.

We implore the Council to be guided by the rule of international law, with no exception or exceptionalism allowed. Do not send the signal that Palestinian lives do not matter. Do not dare say that Israel is not responsible for the bombs it is dropping on their heads. Do not justify the killings. Do not blame the victim — do not do that. What is happening in Gaza is not a military operation, it is a full-scale assault against our people. It is massacres against innocent civilians. Nothing in natural law or international law allows for the targeting of civilians and such indiscriminate, barbaric attacks against them.

Israel has killed, as of now, 3,000 Palestinians, overwhelmingly civilians. More than half of them are women and children. More than 1,000 Palestinian children have been killed so far in the present assault. Israel has killed entire families, several generations at a time. As of this moment, 47 families totalling 500 people have been massacred. There may be even more under the rubble, with 1,000 people unaccounted for. They are most likely under the rubble. How does one justify that? One cannot.

Every day, Palestinians are killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers. That has been the case for years now, and yet we are always the ones being pressed to choose the peaceful path forward. We are asked to show restraint. And we are told that violence is not the answer, even as Israel continues colonizing and annexing our land and maiming and killing our people. Why, then, when Israelis are killed, would anyone condone the unhinged violence being unleashed against our people? Double standards. Why would the Council be unable to call for a ceasefire now, to stop the assault and the massacres?

Stopping the killing and the destruction is indispensable. The humanitarian and health systems in Gaza have collapsed. Over 1 million people have been displaced. People cannot even bury their loved ones and mourn them. Lifting the siege and ensuring immediate and unhindered humanitarian access are equally urgent to save lives.

As I told the Council months ago,

“[r]egardless of how difficult it seems today for anyone to step in and take bold action, trust us when we say that the price of inaction is infinitely higher”. (S/PV.9309, p.6)

We are at that moment. Taking those decisions then would have saved many lives now. Further delays will only condemn more people to certain death.

What is worthy of the Council’s unconditional support? It is the rule of international law and human rights, justice and peace, so that no Palestinians and no Israelis are killed anymore — I repeat, so no Palestinians and no Israelis are killed anymore; so that our people can finally live in freedom and dignity in their ancestral land; and so that two States, Palestine and Israel, can live side by side in peace and security in line with Council resolutions and international law.

We stood in the midst of the storm and stated that no civilians should be killed, and that international law must be upheld. At the same time, Israeli officials were speaking of mighty vengeance. Do Palestinians — including the 2.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, whose lives are being shattered once again as we speak — not have much to avenge? That logic will destroy us all. It should not be tolerated. It is not enough for the Council to state that it disagrees with it; the Council needs to actually stop it.

Israeli officials said, justifying their assault on our people in Gaza, that they were fighting “human animals”. What would have been the reaction if any Palestinian official had done the same? They said they would cut water, electricity, fuel and food for millions of Palestinians — and they did so, in an inhumane and unlawful collective punishment, as bombs destroyed every remaining aspect of life in the Gaza Strip.

Three things must be done now — anything else would be legally, morally and politically unacceptable. First, the assault on our people must stop, now. Secondly, immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access must be allowed throughout the Gaza Strip, now. Thirdly, the forced transfer of our people must be stopped, now. Civilians should be protected wherever they are. Israel has no right to force them to choose between forced displacement or death, or to subject them to both. Nowhere is safe in Gaza. Families embrace one another every night, not knowing whether it is for the last time.

The Council has the staggering numbers of those who have been killed. I wish members could take a look at the lives of those people and how they persisted with courage and creativity despite monumental hardships, including a blockade and repeated assaults, only to see it taken away in an instant. Think of the pain of those who survive. Think about what the rest of their

lives will look like, including for the more than 10,000 people thus far who have been wounded, if they survive this nightmare. In the next hour, Israel will kill 12 Palestinian civilians, including five children. And then again in the next hour and the next and the next, until the Council decides to act.

It is important to recognize the need to protect civilians and to respect international law; it is far more important to actually provide such protection and uphold the law. Nothing can justify the killing of civilians, said all members of the Council repeatedly, just a few days ago. Regardless of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and their legitimate grievances; regardless of the pain and suffering they endured and continue to endure; regardless of the dispossession, occupation, colonization, blockade, killings and mass imprisonment, they cannot resort to violence to free their land or protect their people. By the same logic, then, nothing can justify the killing of Palestinian civilians.

Discrimination and double standards are not only unjust; they undermine the rule of international law everywhere. I ask the members of the Council to think of their credibility the day after, and to think of the deepening divide between the West and the Arab and Muslim world, between North and South and between communities.

Our conflict is a political one, not a religious one. That is what makes it solvable. However, given its regional and international significance, it has an impact on coexistence and peace across the world. If we are to avoid a regional or international spillover, the massacres must stop. The work should start there and start now. We are grateful for the efforts of all who are mobilizing to stop the carnage, allow humanitarian access and put an end to the forced transfer. We will continue working with them. Every minute counts, and the Palestinians in Gaza have no time to lose.

(spoke in Arabic)

In conclusion, I say to our Palestinian people that while it may seem that the world has abandoned us and our children, and that this unjust occupation has isolated us and extinguished the light on our cause, I want to assure them that all the free peoples of the world — who number in the millions — and all peoples with an awakened conscience are standing with us. They hear us, see us and support us, and are filling the streets of world capitals to reject Israel's crimes against us and to support our freedom, dignity and just cause. To our Palestinian people I say that justice and peace will inevitably come;

that the Israeli occupation, no matter how much it kills, destroys and oppresses or how arrogant it becomes, will end; and that our Palestinian State — the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital — will become independent. We will not disappear, and we will not break. Rather, we will heal our wounds and restore our hopes. We will stay, and we will live on, because we are in the right and those who are in the right do not perish or disappear. They will be resurrected, and they are here to stay.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I will begin by saying that if Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, as President Abbas stated just yesterday, it is puzzling that his representative is present in this meeting, let alone voicing an opinion on behalf of the people in Gaza who elected the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS)-like Hamas murderers in Gaza 17 years ago. I hope that all of us here understand that should any representatives of the Palestinian Authority choose to enter Gaza today, or on any other day, they would probably meet the same fate that befell many of their colleagues in 2007 — they would be thrown off 15-storey buildings by Hamas.

The Security Council is facing one of the most pivotal moments in its history. This is a turning point for the Council, a moment of truth that will tell humankind whether the Council's very existence retains its legitimacy and whether the United Nations still has any semblance of a moral compass. This institution was founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust, the genocide of the Jewish people, and just over a week ago, we witnessed yet another attempt at Jewish genocide — the Nazi Hamas massacre of babies, mothers, fathers and the elderly. Every Council member should understand that Hamas is driven by an ideology no different from that of the Nazis. In the group's original Charter, it makes that message very clear. "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it". Article 7 of the Hamas Charter says that "the day of judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews and kill them". Council members should read it for themselves — it is Hitler's *Mein Kampf* on steroids. Hamas's very name is an acronym for Harakat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyyah, which means the Islamic Resistance Movement. It is not a political organization. It is a terror organization no different from ISIS or Al-Qaida. Hamas does not seek to liberate. We withdrew from Gaza 18 years ago. Hamas seeks to exterminate. That is its purpose and stated goal.

After the horrors that we suffered more than a week ago, we must all understand that those are not empty threats but rather an action plan. If Hamas has the opportunity to commit those atrocities again, it will. It will not stop until Israel is obliterated. That is why, for the safety of our people and the security of our future, Israel must obliterate Hamas first. We must do so not for revenge or retaliation but for self-preservation. Such atrocities must never be committed again, and the only way to ensure that is by eliminating this barbaric terror group's capabilities. More than 1,400 Israelis were butchered. Thousands were injured. Nearly 200 hostages — dozens of different nationalities represented among them — were taken to Gaza to be tortured, raped and defiled. Proportionally, that atrocity is 15 times bigger than the attacks of 9/11, but America's enemies were 7,000 miles away, while Israel's are 7,000 feet away.

For the past 16 years, the international community and the United Nations have been complacent about Hamas's terrorist build-up. The world has kept its head in the sand while Hamas has embedded its missiles and rockets and its war machine within and beneath the civilian population of Gaza. It accepted the absurd reality of a law-abiding democracy living side by side with cancerous, genocidal terrorists thirsty for Israeli blood who fire tens of thousands of missiles and rockets indiscriminately at our civilians. Future generations will look back in disbelief on the fact that the world could be so naive, a mere 80 years after Hitler. But that is no longer the case. We have seen with our own eyes that nothing will change Hamas's ideology — not the rehabilitation of Gaza, not economic incentives and not any promise of a brighter future. The United Nations has tried. The United States has tried. Many in this Chamber have tried, but everyone has failed. Nothing can change a genocidal ideology. There is only one way to cure a cancer, and it is the evisceration of every cancerous cell.

The international community has poured billions of dollars into Gaza, and all of it went to Hamas's war machine and its subterranean city of terror. Abundant resources and aid destined for the people of Gaza were squandered by those barbaric terror monsters. Every inch of the Gaza Strip has been exploited for Hamas's violent goals. To Hamas, Gazan civilians are nothing more than cannon fodder. They are human shields who in death become pawns in Hamas's libellous propaganda campaign. Right now, as we speak, they are warning Gazans against evacuating towards the south — as we evacuated our own civilians near our

southern border — so as to then use their bodies to recruit countries to pressure Israel.

Therefore, let me be clear. Israel is on a rescue mission: a rescue mission to save our hostages; a rescue mission to save our future and to save the people of Gaza from their savage tyrants. It is a rescue mission. This rescue mission can end quickly. Should Hamas put down its arms tomorrow, return our hostages and turn itself in, this war can end without one more shot being fired. Why are Council members not calling on Hamas to do that? Why is that not part of the draft resolutions?

I want to reiterate that the Security Council now stands at one of its most pivotal crossroads. Will the Council support the fight for civilization, or will it incentivize the genocidal jihadists who aim to murder all the infidels? For a body dedicated to security, that should not even be a question.

The first step that the Council must take — before any calls for aid, calm or restraint — is to designate Hamas as the murderous terror organization that it is, just as the Council did with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Al-Qaida.

Secondly, and no less important, the Council must support Israel's right to defend itself. But supporting that right does not mean echoing empty words. It means standing in solidarity with Israel in our rescue mission to obliterate the terror capabilities of Hamas. If Hamas is not obliterated, such atrocities will be repeated — and not only in Israel. Supporting Israel's right to defend itself means supporting Israel's goal of eradicating those cancerous jihadists.

Israel is a law-abiding country that upholds international law. As all Council members know, we are facing a genocidal terror group that does not even recognize the existence of international law. The Council must remember that. Then how can it be that the focus of the Security Council is not, first, to designate Hamas as a terror organization; secondly, to hold Hamas fully and solely accountable for the situation in Gaza; thirdly, to fully support Israel's right to defend itself; and fourthly, to immediately and unconditionally demand that Hamas release all the abducted hostages.

I urge all Council members to think about those objectives and to ensure that they are all addressed in any future discussions. Israel will not accept having our hands tied while we are fighting for our security and our children's future.

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

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Brazil's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I wish you every success in facilitating the Council's work. I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Security Council is meeting today as the brutal and fierce Israeli war continues in the Gaza Strip, bringing death and destruction and threatening to erupt into wider spirals of violence throughout the entire region. The Arab Group therefore stresses the need to immediately stop this war and prevent it from spreading in order to prevent the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip from worsening. The Group stresses that the failure of the international community to stop this war is a failure to implement international law, to protect common human values and to protect innocent civilians, who are facing the hell of war and cannot access the most basic necessities of life, such as shelter, food, drinking water, electricity and health care. We stress that the international silence on the war and on the killing the Gaza Strip is facing means silence on an aggression that strips the people of Gaza of their humanity and their right to protection, and silence on Israel's flagrant violations of international law.

We underline that Israel's blocking of the delivery of urgent humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and forcing of more than a million citizens in northern Gaza out of their homes are grave violations of international law and international humanitarian law. We therefore stress the need for that aid to be delivered immediately, without any delay. In that regard, we commend the major role and unprecedented efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in assisting civilians in the Gaza Strip. Given the capacity gaps and lack of necessary funding the Agency is facing, we stress the need for the international community to provide the Agency with the immediate support it needs to be able to carry out its functions and humanitarian duties in accordance with its United Nations mandate.

The Arab Group underscores that any blatant attempt or threat to forcibly displace or deport the Palestinians from their homeland to the Arab Republic of Egypt and other neighbouring countries is a crime, which we condemn and reject, and a grave violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949. We stress in that regard the need to apply the rules of international law, international

humanitarian law and ethical standards, without discrimination on the basis of nationality or identity. In addressing the war in the Gaza Strip, the international community must use the same set of standards to condemn the killing of Palestinian civilians as it does in condemning the killing of Israeli civilians. Civilians are victims, regardless of their identity or nationality.

We would like to remind the Council that what Israel is doing is not within its right to self-defence, and it is unfortunate that some countries continue to repeat that Israel has the right to defend itself in the Gaza Strip, which is an occupied territory. In that regard, we recall in particular paragraph 139 of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, which states that Israel does not have the right to self-defence in the occupied Palestinian territory (see A/ES-10/273). What applies in this case, however, are the provisions of international humanitarian law pertaining to a military response to armed attacks in occupied territories.

The occupying Power must respect the principles of distinction between military targets, civilians and civilian objects. It must not direct attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as is happening now. Its response must be proportional, and it must take the necessary precautions to protect civilians.

As we follow the developments in the situation, it is clear that Israel's military actions in Gaza are not in line with the minimum requirements of international humanitarian law, and Israel does not even claim to respect those requirements, as the Council heard a while ago. The statements of Israel's senior political and military officials leave no room for doubt that what it is committing and will continue to commit will override every legal, moral and humanitarian standard against a defenceless people. Meanwhile, the international community is not heeding their calls for help.

The Arab Group reaffirms that a just and comprehensive peace, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, is a strategic Arab choice that represents the only way to protect the entire region from the cycle of violence.

In conclusion, we stress that Israel will not obtain peace and security unless the Palestinian people obtain security and freedom in their independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the 4 June 1967 lines.

The meeting rose at 8.50 p.m.