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Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

10 August 2025

Mr. President, Excellencies,

I brief you for the second time this week as the situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, placing over two million Palestinians in even greater peril and further endangering the lives of the remaining hostages.

The latest decision by the Government of Israel risks igniting another horrific chapter in this conflict, with potential consequences beyond Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

On 8 August, Israel's Security Cabinet reportedly approved Prime Minister Netanyahu's proposed plan for "defeating Hamas" and endorsed five "principles for ending the war": the disarmament of Hamas, the release of all hostages; the Gaza Strip's demilitarization; Israeli security control over the Strip; and the establishment of an alternative civilian administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority.

The Prime Minister's office also announced that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) will prepare to take control of Gaza City, while providing humanitarian assistance outside combat zones. The IDF said that it is fully mobilized and preparing for an expanded military operation in Gaza.

This is yet another dangerous escalation of the conflict.

For now, we have limited official details of Israel's military plans. However, according to Israeli media reports, the government foresees the displacement of all civilians from Gaza City, by 7 October 2025, affecting some 800,000 people, many of them previously displaced. Reports indicate that the IDF would then surround the city for three months. This would then reportedly be followed by an additional two months to seize control of central Gaza's camps and clear the entire area of Palestinian armed groups.

Mr. President,

We are already witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe of unimaginable scale in Gaza. Director Ramesh Rajasingham from OCHA will shortly provide you with the latest updates in this regard.

If these plans are implemented, they will likely trigger another calamity in Gaza, reverberating across the region and causing further forced displacement, killings, and destruction – compounding the unbearable

suffering of the population. Last night thousands of protesters gathered in Tel Aviv and cities across Israel to call for a ceasefire and hostage release deal.

The UN has been unequivocal: the only way to stop the immense human suffering in Gaza is through a full, immediate, and permanent ceasefire. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. Israel must comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law, allowing rapid, safe, unimpeded, and large-scale delivery of humanitarian aid to the population. Civilians – including humanitarian workers, and those seeking aid – must be protected.

Everyone, has the right to life, liberty, and security. Palestinians must be able to return to their homes. In its 19 July 2024 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice stated that “Israel, as the occupying Power, has the obligation not to impede the Palestinian people from exercising its right to self-determination, including its right to an independent and sovereign State, over the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

Mr. President,

As I emphasized to this Council a few days ago, there is no military solution to the armed conflict in Gaza or the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There will be no sustainable solution without an end to Israel’s unlawful occupation and the achievement of a viable two-State solution. Gaza is, and must remain, an integral part of a Palestinian State.

We must plan for Gaza’s future as we address the urgency of developments on the ground today.

We must establish political and security frameworks that can relieve the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, start early recovery and reconstruction, address the legitimate security concerns of Israelis and Palestinians, and forge a path for the realization of a viable two-State solution. In this regard I urge the immediate implementation of the political, humanitarian, and security steps outlined in the *New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution*.

Critically, these frameworks must facilitate a legitimate Palestinian Government that can reunify Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, politically, economically, and administratively. This Government must represent Palestinians across the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian territory. A united leadership is crucial to managing post-conflict Gaza and advancing Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty.

I urge the Palestinian Authority to advance its stated goal of holding elections. Palestinians have the right to have their voices heard and to be meaningfully included in the process of shaping the future of the State of Palestine.

Our ultimate goal remains unchanged: Israel and a fully independent, democratic, contiguous, viable, and sovereign Palestinian State, of which Gaza is an integral part – living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

Thank you.