

**Mr. Amil** (Pakistan): First, we would like to thank Ambassador Ripert, Ambassador Lacroix and the French delegation for convening this debate during France's presidency of the Council. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing.

It has been almost a decade since the United Nations began to systematically approach the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict. Pakistan has been an avid supporter of these efforts. We have always espoused the calls for a comprehensive approach and system-wide coherence in effectively addressing the challenges related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This approach starts with prevention, and in that regard we have always emphasized the need to fully utilize and put into practice the Charter's provisions and mechanisms for the pacific settlement of disputes.

We believe that just, peaceful and durable settlements of conflicts require above all addressing their root causes. Where conflicts have erupted, Pakistan has also contributed in tangible terms to the international community's efforts to contain and resolve those conflicts. As the leading contributor of military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Pakistan has played its role in restoring peace and stability and creating the overall conditions in which civilian lives can best be protected. We shall continue our contribution in that regard.

There exist internationally agreed mechanisms, including international laws, rules and regulations, as well as responsibilities and obligations with regard to the question of protection of civilians in armed conflict. The issue at hand is not the lack of clarity or understanding, but the inability to implement these agreed mechanisms. This is the main focus of our intervention today.

As we take the floor one after another, restating or rehashing known positions or offering new ideas on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I am sure we all realize that the world is watching us. As Gaza burns, the world is watching us. The world is watching this Council in particular with disappointment. For while this Council spends a day debating high-sounding moral principles and respect for international law, it has failed to carry out its own primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.

For a debate of the Council on this issue, these are no ordinary circumstances. The 1.5 million Palestinians imprisoned in Gaza, collectively punished, callously persecuted, strangulated and blockaded for years by Israel, the occupying Power, have been subjected to a new deliberate campaign of terror, death and destruction, which continues for the nineteenth day as the entire world watches in horror and disbelief. The besieged people of Gaza, we must not forget, are mostly the Palestinians who were originally dispossessed and driven from their homes by the Israeli occupation. Under the blockade in Gaza, the choice given to them has been either to starve or to submit.

Over the years, stark and disturbing evidence has made it clear that civilians, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children, continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict and remain the prime victims in such situations. This is also the case in Gaza.

Less than a month ago, we celebrated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international community reaffirmed its pledge to uphold the value of the Declaration. Yet one month after reiterating that “we will not shy away” from the magnitude of the challenges of promoting and protecting human rights, the Security Council appears unable to enforce compliance with resolution 1860 (2009) or to protect the innocent people caught in the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Resolution 1860 (2009) also condemns all violence and hostilities directed against civilians and all acts of terrorism. Since the adoption of the resolution, the number of Palestinians killed in the Israeli aggression has increased to around 1,000; almost 40 per cent of the killed and the nearly 5,000 wounded Palestinians are women and children.

Empirical evidence throughout history shows that systematic and consistent violations of the rights of civilians are most frequent and pervasive in situations of foreign occupation and suppression of the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination. This holds particularly true for the people of Palestine and of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The challenges of addressing gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law are exacerbated by the problem of inequity in the international response. While in some situations there is a quick and even a robust response, in others, such as Gaza, the perpetrators enjoy virtual impunity. The record of the Security Council itself in this context is not without blemish. In these circumstances, effective and swift application of the concept of protection of civilians in Gaza is a litmus test for this Council’s future actions on this agenda item.

The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits collective penalties and collective punishment of the civilian population. The responsibility of Israel, as the occupying Power, is clear in that regard. In the context

of protecting civilians in Gaza, the international community must live up to its responsibilities, and in particular the Security Council should lead the efforts to implement its own resolution 1860 (2009). We strongly feel that deliberate violence against humanitarian and United Nations personnel helping to protect civilians is unacceptable in any situation.

We call for renewed determination to provide protection to all innocent civilians caught in armed conflicts and under foreign occupation, including those we see dying by the minute in Gaza as we speak.