

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Today, we meet once again to consider the subject of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It is a matter of great concern, that in spite of the important progress achieved by the international community since the middle of the last century in developing international law mechanisms to promote the principle of the protection of civilians and to determine criminal responsibility for massacres committed against thousands of civilians in armed conflicts, we continue to witness new and tragic forms of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Such forms include willful killing, rape, the confiscation and destruction of properties, forcible displacement and other acts of intimidation, which constitute flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law. These acts, which include attacks on humanitarian and media personnel with complete impunity, are committed and used by warring parties as a tool for exerting maximum political pressure to achieve their goals in areas of conflict at the expense of the security and safety of innocent civilians.

We believe that the reason such violations persist is due not to the incapacity of the almost fully integrated legal and humanitarian framework established by the United Nations and represented in international legal instruments on this issue — including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and its two Additional Protocols of 1977 and the resolutions and presidential statements issued by the Security Council on the protection of civilians — but lies rather in the non-compliance of some states parties with their respective obligations under these instruments and the selective approach in their implementation in some areas of conflict.

It is deeply regrettable that we for 19 days have witnessed a vivid example of the contempt of some States for the resolutions of this Council and the exercise of double standards and selectivity in their implementation. Israel is pursuing its barbaric military assaults against the population of Gaza for the sixth day after the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. In its paragraph 5, it also condemns in plain language all violence and hostilities directed against civilians.

Despite the adoption of this resolution, Israel has continued to commit war crimes against the Palestinian people in Gaza by bombarding civilian areas with internationally banned weapons, using excessive force and imposing severe collective punishments against unarmed civilians, including through siege, the closure of crossing points and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance, in flagrant violation of the principles of human rights and relevant international resolutions and laws.

What is happening in Gaza Strip is testimony to the serious impact of the international community's failure to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy and the selectivity of their implementation, and to its inability to shoulder its responsibilities and legal commitments in the protection of innocent civilians during conflicts. The death toll among the Palestinian people has so far surpassed 1,000 people, 40 per cent of whom are

women and children, and does not account for the missing persons and those suffering from serious injuries and physical and mental disabilities, whose numbers have exceeded 4,000, half of whom are children and women. Their numbers are increasing daily.

The United Arab Emirates supports international efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian question through peaceful means, including the Arab Peace Initiative and the Annapolis Understanding, and urges the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to revisit the implementation standards relating to the protection of civilians when it considers the situation in existing armed conflicts, in accordance with its resolution 1674 (2006), which recognizes the primary responsibility of conflicting parties for protecting civilians in armed conflicts, as well as the shared responsibility of the international community as a whole to assist States to shoulder their responsibility in this regard.

In this context, we affirm the importance of the following.

First, pressure must be exerted on Israel to comply with the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009). It must immediately cease its aggression against the Palestinian civilian population, fully withdraw from Gaza and open all crossing points in order to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian people.

Secondly, the international community must exert pressure on Israel to resume peace negotiations, given that the present crisis has shown the need to expedite a serious and peaceful negotiating process. It must also require Israel, the occupying Power, to shoulder its responsibility and honour its previous agreements and commitments, which would contribute to establishing an independent Palestinian State as soon as possible.

Thirdly, an international commission of inquiry must be established to investigate the war crimes committed by Israel against civilians in Gaza and to prosecute those responsible in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the latest of which is the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council.

Here, we would like to reaffirm the importance of strengthening the international role that the Security Council must play in collaboration with specialized departments and committees established by the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council, particularly in taking effective, swift and decisive action to prevent the suffering of civilians in conflict areas. That includes providing a safe and secure environment for civilians in armed conflicts, which, under the Charter of the United Nations, is one of the Security Council's priority tasks in maintaining international peace and security and in building peace.

In that connection, we emphasize the need to develop methods for monitoring acts committed against civilians during armed conflicts and the need for measures to be taken to persuade all countries and parties to conflicts throughout the world to fulfill their commitment not to target civilians and to protect their lives, property and legitimate interests without applying double standards, bearing in mind the need to fully respect the

sovereignty of States and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs.