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**Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East,  
including the Palestinian Question  
5 August 2025**

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel continues to deteriorate, with Palestinian and Israeli civilians, including the remaining hostages in Gaza, continuing to suffer immensely as a result.

In the past week, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad released images and videos of two hostages – Evaytar David and Rom Braslavsky – looking visibly emaciated, as they described the appalling conditions of their captivity. The scenes of Evaytar apparently being forced to dig his own grave are appalling. These images, and their own accounts of their treatment, have horrified us all. They are an affront to humanity itself. I would like to acknowledge the presence of Ilay David, the brother of Evyatar David, who we will hear from shortly.

Mr. David,

Please know that we at the United Nations recognize the profound pain and hardship endured by the families and loved ones of those who remain in captivity. Nearly two years have passed, with the immeasurable suffering and fear intensifying with every passing day. I am especially mindful that this week, the Jewish community commemorated Tisha B'Av, a day of mourning and remembrance of historical tragedies endured by the Jewish people — a time that echoes with the pain of loss across generations. I pay tribute to your courage and determination, and I share your dearest wish: for your brother, and all hostages held in Gaza, to be immediately and unconditionally released.

Mr. President,

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups continue to hold 50 hostages, 28 of whom are thought to be deceased, in captivity in horrific conditions. Released hostages have relayed distressing accounts of deprivation, ill-treatment, and abuse. Since 7 October 2023, Hamas and other armed groups have circulated dozens of videos of hostages, including statements made by hostages under duress and clearly suffering, including the most recent footage of Evaytar David and Rom Braslavsky.

International law is clear. Hostage-taking is prohibited – it is a war crime. Those deprived of liberty must be treated humanely and with dignity and allowed to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross. They must never be subject to ill-treatment, abuse, or humiliation, as these would also constitute violations of relevant rules of international law. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. They must be freed— now.

Mr. President,

The situation in Gaza is horrifying – it is unbearable. Palestinians are subjected to squalid, inhumane conditions on a daily basis.

Since the beginning of the conflict, over 60,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. Since the end of May, over 1,200 Palestinians have been killed and over 8,100 injured while trying to access food supplies, including in the vicinity of militarized aid distribution sites. The deaths and injuries continue to mount, day by day, with no end in sight to the suffering.

Israel continues to severely restrict humanitarian assistance entering Gaza, and the aid that is permitted to enter is grossly inadequate. Hunger is everywhere in Gaza, visible in the faces of children and in the desperation of parents risking their lives to access the most basic supplies.

I would like to echo the Secretary-General's condemnation of the ongoing violence in Gaza, including the shooting, killing, and injuring of people attempting to get food for their families. International law is clear. Civilians must be respected, protected and never targeted or deliberately deprived of food or access to other lifesaving aid – doing so is a war crime.

Israel must immediately allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of sufficient amounts of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, to avert further suffering and loss of life.

Mr. President,

the latest reports regarding Prime Minister Netanyahu's possible decision to expand Israel's military operations through the entire Gaza Strip, if true, are deeply alarming. This would risk catastrophic consequences for millions of Palestinians and could further endanger the lives of the remaining hostages in Gaza.

International law is clear in this regard. Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State. As declared by the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, the State of Israel is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem – as rapidly as possible.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has been clear: there is only one path to ending the ongoing violence and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza — a full and permanent ceasefire. The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Life-saving humanitarian aid must flow into Gaza at scale and without obstruction, and civilians must be guaranteed safe, unhindered access to assistance.

There is no military solution to the conflict in Gaza or the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 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 secure an end to Israel's unlawful occupation and achieve a sustainable two-State solution - 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.