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Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General –on Gaza

Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General is closely following developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory as the first phase of the ceasefire and hostage release deal reaches its conclusion. The past six weeks have provided a fragile but vital reprieve, offering a measure of relief to both Palestinians and Israelis. Thousands of trucks carrying life-saving assistance entered Gaza, with aid having reached nearly every person in the Strip. It is imperative that all efforts be made to prevent a return to hostilities, which would be catastrophic.

The Secretary-General urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint and find a way forward on the next phase. A permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages are essential to preventing escalation and averting more devastating consequences for civilians. The Secretary-General continues to call for the dignified, immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The parties must ensure humane treatment for all those held under their power. Humanitarian aid must continue to flow, without impediment, be adequately funded, and occur in an environment ensuring the safety and security of civilians and other protected persons, including humanitarian workers.

The Secretary-General also calls for an urgent de-escalation of the alarming situation in the occupied West Bank.

As Ramadan -- a time of peace and reflection -- begins, the Secretary-General calls on all sides to spare no efforts to end all violence. The United Nations stands ready to support all such endeavours.

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