

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; the Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Ref.: AL ISR 1/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

22 January 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence and Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/10, 55/5, 51/7, 53/7, 55/2, 53/4, 49/13, 52/9, 51/21, 50/6, 57/7, 54/9, 53/10, 52/36, 49/5, 49/10, 54/10, 54/8 and 51/19.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the **recent human rights violations related to Israel's offensive in Lebanon, causing civilian casualties and massive destruction of civilian objects, including homes, water and sanitation infrastructure, agricultural lands, cultural heritage sites and places of religious**

worship; triggering mass forced displacement of civilians, and causing disruptions of access to healthcare and education, as well as loss of livelihoods and degraded ecosystems.

According to the information received:

Context with regard to the hostilities in Lebanon

Since 8 October 2023, Israel and Hezbollah forces have engaged in nearly a year of hostilities, which escalated significantly following the twin pager and walkie talkie attacks on 17 September 2024, as well as Israel's ensuing ground invasion of Lebanon on 1 October 2024 - making it the sixth such military action since 1978. Israeli military operations included wide-impact aerial bombardments, artillery shelling, and a ground invasion along Lebanon's southern border, flattening Lebanese villages and reducing entire neighborhoods to rubble. Israel's actions engendered significant civilian casualties, widespread demolition, mass displacement, loss of livelihoods, massive destruction of residential, religious, and cultural infrastructure as well as heritage sites and places of worship, environmental harm and severe disruptions in access to healthcare and education.

For its part, reports indicate that Hezbollah began firing missiles and munitions into northern Israel a day after the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks and Israel's warfare and apparent atrocity crimes in Gaza. Israeli news agencies also claimed that over 9,000 buildings had been damaged or destroyed by Hezbollah operations. In turn, Israel claimed that its attacks in Lebanon solely targeted Hezbollah forces, and they claimed that Hezbollah placed military infrastructure in civilian areas. Israel has reportedly used these accusations as justification for nationwide indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks in Lebanon.

The Governments of Israel and Lebanon signed a ceasefire agreement on 27 November 2024. The agreement calls for Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon, and for Hezbollah to end its armed presence there, within 60 days.

Violations of international humanitarian law, including what could amount to war crimes, by the Israeli military have been widely documented by several state, non-state, NGO, and UN sources, including apparently deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, journalists, healthcare workers, peacekeepers, and civilian infrastructure, including residential buildings, healthcare facilities, roads, bridges, water supply and irrigation channels, electricity grids, and gas stations.

Civilian Casualties in Lebanon

The recent months of escalated conflict, following 11 months of ongoing hostilities – the most intense the country has experienced since 2006 – have had devastating consequences across Lebanon.

The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health reported that, as of 4 December 2024, Israeli airstrikes have resulted in the injury of 16,638 persons and the killings of

4,047 civilian residents, including 316 children and 790 women, with nearly 84% of total deaths occurring since mid-September 2024.

As of 20 December 2024, civil society organizations reported that these Hezbollah attacks, including apparently deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, had killed over 100 people and led to the displacement of around 63,000 residents in northern Israel, despite the interception by Israel's Iron Dome air defense system.

Destruction of Housing and Civilian Objects and Loss of Livelihoods in Lebanon

Israel's ground invasion in Lebanon included Israeli military setting lands on fire, shelling and conducting strikes on civilian homes, carpet-bombing crowded residential areas, booby-trapping houses, and issuing military evacuation 'orders' which are reported to have been at times inaccurate and issued at extremely short notice to Lebanese civilians while instructing them to evacuate homes and towns as far as 20 miles from the border, as well as in southern suburbs in the capital Beirut. The Israeli Combat Engineering Unit planted explosives in several Lebanese border towns under its occupation. Videos posted across social media documented the Israeli soldiers celebrating the demolitions of buildings caused by these planted explosives while watching through a drone controller screen from a safe distance.¹ The number of unexploded ordnances remains unclear and a matter of ongoing concern.

On 4 October 2024, Israel also attacked the main Lebanon/Syria border crossing at Masnaa, claiming that Hezbollah used it to transfer weapons. This attack disrupted the movement of people fleeing the war into Syria as well as the transfer of humanitarian aid and supplies along the main highway connecting Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

A World Bank damage assessment, as of 27 October 2024, identified 99,209 housing units nationwide as partially or fully damaged. The assessment covered at least 80 percent of Lebanon's conflict-affected areas, spanning six out of nine governorates (Baalbek-Hermel, Beirut, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh, and the South), with the most severely affected districts being Tyre, Nabatieh, Saida, Bint Jbeil, and Marjayoun. Damage to physical infrastructure alone has been estimated at USD 3.4 billion, with economic losses reaching USD 5.1 billion. The housing sector was reported to be affected the most severely, accounting for USD 3.2 billion in damage and losses.² As of mid-November 2024, the most urgent reconstruction needs were concentrated in the Nabatieh and South Governorates (approximately USD 1.5 billion and USD 1.2 billion respectively), followed by the Bekaa (USD 415 million), Mount Lebanon, and Beirut. To put this in context, the GDP of entire Lebanon in 2022 was 20.99 billion USD.

¹ [Israeli soldiers celebrate destruction of Lebanese village | Al Jazeera](#) and [Zone of destruction: Israeli forces demolishing whole towns in southern Lebanon | NBC News](#) and [Le Monde](#)

² [New World Bank Report Assesses Impact of Conflict on Lebanon's Economy and Key Sectors](#)

A remote building destruction and debris quantities assessment conducted by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Lebanon), along with a couple of universities, indicated that as of 5 November 2024, 15,633 buildings in the South and Nabatieh Governorates had been totally or partially destroyed, equating to 33,448 housing units. In addition, satellite imagery analysis focusing on the Bint Jbeil district, which covers approximately one-third of the area south and east of the Litani River, found that approximately 43.2% of assessed buildings (14,916 out of 34,490) were damaged or destroyed due to heavy shelling and ground operations. Certain localities, such as Aita al-Shaab and the towns of Yaroun, Aitaroun, and Ramyeh, have also experienced the destruction of more than half of their buildings.

As of 7 November 2024, in the South of Lebanon alone, over 12,000 buildings had been destroyed or damaged, out of which 5,600 buildings have been destroyed, marking 42% of all buildings in the border area.

On 28 October 2024, Lebanon's National Human Rights Commission stated that "the ongoing destruction campaign carried out by the Israeli army in southern Lebanon is a war crime. Research, media reports, and studies from several research centres, along with broadcasted videos, reveal that Israeli forces are completely removing residential buildings in a move intended to render vast areas uninhabitable."

The simultaneous damage to houses, roads, electricity, and transportation networks has rendered several Lebanese towns uninhabitable and severely restricted the delivery of humanitarian aid, the movement of people and goods, and the local population's access to education and healthcare services.

Damage to Cultural, Religious, and Heritage Sites in Lebanon

In 2024, the ongoing Israeli military operations in Lebanon, produced further significant damage to cultural heritage sites, places of worship, and local infrastructure. Airstrikes and artillery targeted historical landmarks, religious sites, and cultural institutions, putting Lebanon's rich cultural heritage, including ancient ruins, churches, mosques, and traditional buildings, at major risk. Southern Lebanon, home to key archaeological sites from the Phoenician, Roman, and Byzantine periods, indeed faced the threat of destruction, with some UNESCO World Heritage sites irremediably impacted.

In addition to Beirut and its suburbs, a number of towns and villages, such as Aita al-Shaab, Derdghaya, Kfar Tebnit, Yaroun, Mhaibib, Mays al-Jabal, Maroun al-Ras, Shamaa and Blida, suffered extensive damage to their cultural heritage, with numerous smaller villages also impacted by airstrikes and ground operations. These actions have caused displacement and loss of essential services, leaving lasting scars on the region's cultural and social fabric.

Many of the targeted locations across Lebanon are recognized UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Neolithic site of Byblos, the Roman remains of Tyre, Baalbek, Anjar and the International Fair of Tripoli. These structures often serve as centers for community gathering, cultural expression, and the

preservation of traditions and collective memory.

Reports indicate that Israeli shelling, between October and November 2024, destroyed a 2,000-year-old shrine to the prophet Benjamin in Mhaibib, a 300-year-old mosque in Yaroun, a Catholic church in Yaroun, Al-Khidr religious shrine revered by both Muslims and Christians in Yaroun, two mosques in Maroun al-Ras, an archaeological site on Tell Aar in Lebanon, mosques in Kfar Dunin, Tayr Debba, Kfar Tibnit, Blida, Mijdal Salam, Abbasieh, Al-Dhaira and Om At-Tout and a Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Tyre, among other targeted religious shrines, churches, mosques, ancient castles, and other heritage buildings.

In addition to historical structures, museums and libraries were damaged, depriving local communities of vital cultural resources. The destruction has drawn condemnation from international organizations like UNESCO, which has called for the protection of these sites amid the conflict and warned that the deliberate targeting of sites under its protection could constitute war crime under international law.

Besides, on 18 November 2024, the UNESCO Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict granted provisional enhanced protection to 34 Lebanese archaeological sites, affording them the highest level of protection against attack and use for military purposes. Hence, the targeting of these sites could constitute a violation of the 1954 Hague Convention in certain circumstances and could open the possibility of prosecution for war crimes on that basis.

Environmental and Agricultural Losses in Lebanon

The Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research has reported that between 8 October 2023 and 5 December 2024, approximately 1,900 hectares of forests and agricultural land have been damaged through intentional burning and bombing. Damage to the agricultural sector was estimated at USD 124 million, with losses exceeding USD 1.1 billion attributable to crop destruction, livestock losses, and the displacement of farmers and pastoralists.

A rapid needs assessment conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, reported that the impact is most acute in the southern districts of Bent Jbeil, Nabatieh, Marjaayoun and Tyre. In those areas, approximately 95% of agricultural households have been displaced – nearly all the crop producers, and some 90% of livestock farmers have not been able to access their land and farms. The olive sector, a cornerstone of Lebanon's agriculture, has also suffered severe destruction. With over 110,000 farmers relying on 12 million olive trees that cover nearly a quarter of the country's agricultural land, this sector has been significantly impacted. Olive harvesting, which serves as a primary source of income for many rural communities and contributes 7% of Lebanon's agricultural GDP, is now in jeopardy.

Compounding these challenges, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projection indicates that 1.26 million people (23% of the population) are expected to face acute food insecurity (IPC phase 3 or above) between April and September 2024. This includes 85,000 individuals in IPC phase 4 (emergency) and 1.18 million in IPC phase 3 (crisis).

Surface and groundwater resources have also been impacted, with contamination of rivers and aquifers and damage to at least 40 water facilities, affecting the drinking water of an estimated 450,000 residents in Lebanon.

The building destruction and debris quantities assessment conducted by the UN-Habitat Lebanon and two universities, reported over 8 million tons of debris generated from destroyed buildings in the South and Nabatieh Governorates. Assessments by Lebanon's National Council for Scientific Research report that the total volume of rubble from completely destroyed buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs is also between 1.2 and 1.7 million m³.

The widespread and allegedly unlawful use of white phosphorus munitions in Lebanon by Israeli forces since October 2023 has been documented by several sources, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. This has rendered large areas of farmland uncultivable, leaving farmers uncertain about whether their land will ever be suitable for crop cultivation again. The Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research reported 175 Israeli attacks over residential areas using "airbust" white phosphorus munitions between October 2023 and July 2024, with at least 17 municipalities targeted across South Lebanon. These white phosphorus munitions spread their substances over a 125 to 259 meters diameter, indiscriminately putting civilians at risk amidst incendiary effects inflicting death, injuries, and fires in homes, agricultural lands, and other civilian objects.³ On 16 October 2023, 4 homes were reportedly burnt and at least 9 civilians killed in the Lebanese town of Dhayra following Israeli artillery shells containing incendiary material. As of May 2024, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health reported that exposure to white phosphorus had injured at least 173 people.

Military Displacement Orders and Forced Displacement of Residents in Lebanon

The Israeli military issued short-notice military displacement orders and evacuation warnings to residents of southern suburbs of Beirut and South Lebanon, sometimes via social media channels in the middle of the night with less than 30 minutes' notice. By 7 October 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that one quarter of Lebanese territory was under Israeli military displacement orders. Amnesty International has criticized these "evacuation orders" as ineffective for civilian protection, citing that the warnings provide missing maps, lack a clear timeline or details on safe routes, are released with short notice in the middle of the night on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) by Israel's military Arabic spokesperson, and cover large geographical areas, alleging residents

³ [Evidence of Israel's unlawful use of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon as cross-border hostilities escalate](#)

there are “located near Hezbollah interests”.

Several areas have reportedly faced massive forced internal displacement, namely Southern Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut, Baalbek, and the Bekaa. As of 25 November 2024, a total of 899,700 people were reported displaced from their villages and productive lands within Lebanon due to the conflict and Israel’s military displacement orders. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also reported on cross-border movement, specifically by 27 November 2024, over 562,000 had crossed from Lebanon into Syria, 63% of whom were Syrian. Additionally, an estimated 41,000 Lebanese fled to Iraq, with many more unaccounted for in unrecorded migration flows. By that day as well, the Lebanese national Disaster Risk Management shelter monitoring dashboard recorded 1,175 open collective shelter sites, of which 977 had reached full capacity, housing approximately 188,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Following that ceasefire agreement, several collective shelters have been decommissioned due to the mass return movements. As of 9 January 2025, the IOM reported around 3,769 IDPs remaining in 39 collective sites across Lebanon, while 868,947 IDPs began returning to their communities across 276 cadastral zones in Lebanon.

According to UN OCHA, many displaced families returned to find their homes severely damaged or destroyed, with limited access to basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation. Among those displaced are women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrant workers, and other groups in vulnerable situations.

Impact on the Health Sector in Lebanon

As of 28 November 2024, the World Health Organization reported 158 attacks on healthcare facilities, resulting in the deaths of 241 healthcare workers and injuries to 292 others while on duty, including paramedics, civil defense (Lebanon’s public emergency medical response providers), and hospital staff. These attacks rendered 7 hospitals non-operational and forced the closure of 7 other hospitals and 76 primary healthcare centers and dispensaries, with the World Bank estimating USD 74 million in damages and losses in the health sector.

After the ceasefire, as of 4 December, some healthcare centers reopened. Nonetheless, 36 primary healthcare centers and dispensaries, as well as 6 hospitals, remained closed, and 6 other hospitals continued partial operations.

Impact on Children and Education in Lebanon

By 23 October 2024, UNICEF reported that at least 400,000 children have been forcibly displaced, and education had been disrupted due to the use of schools as shelters. UNICEF reported that approximately 40% of the 1,014 opened shelters were located in public schools, and the start of the 2024-2025 school year was postponed to early November, with schools finally reopening in early

November (12 November).

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon reported that an estimated 549,675 students and 45,000 teachers were impacted by the crisis, approximately 40% of all enrolled students were displaced, over 600 schools had been repurposed as displacement collective shelters, at least 60% of the public schools served as shelters, and 75% of public schools and educational establishments were rendered unable to provide education services. The World Bank also assessed that the lost private school tuition fees and the costs of interim schooling arrangements have inflicted an estimated USD 215 million in financial losses on the education sector.

Indiscriminate Attacks on and Targeting of Journalists

On 25 October 2024, around 3 a.m., an Israeli airstrike on Hasbaya killed three journalists and injured four others while they slept in a building clearly marked for media use, with “PRESS” signage on vehicles parked outside.

As of 28 November, UNESCO reported 6 Lebanese journalists killed by Israeli attacks since 7 October 2023.

Attacks against UN Peacekeepers

Israel has claimed that Hezbollah uses the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) personnel and positions as “human shields” and have reportedly deployed Israeli tanks within meters of peacekeepers’ positions and UNIFIL units.

UNIFIL has reported deliberate attacks by Israeli forces on its headquarters in Naqoura in Lebanon. On 10 October 2024, UNIFIL issued a statement declaring, “UNIFIL’s Naqoura headquarters and nearby positions have been repeatedly hit” and that on that day “two peacekeepers were injured after an Israeli Merkava tank fired its weapon toward an observation tower at UNIFIL’s headquarters in Naqoura, directly hitting it and causing them to fall.”

Israeli “Twin Attacks” Across Lebanon

Between 3.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. on 17 September 2024, and again just before 5.00 p.m. on 18 September 2024, hidden explosives in thousands of pagers and hundreds of handheld walkie-talkies detonated across Lebanon. At least 32 people were killed, including a boy, a girl, and two medical personnel, and more than 3,250 were injured. The following day, Israeli Defense Minister declared a “new era” of warfare with Lebanon and praised the “excellent achievements” of Israeli security and intelligence forces.

On 11 November 2024, Israel’s Prime Minister’s Office confirmed their responsibility for the pager attacks in Lebanon through a statement by their Prime Minister declaring, “the pager operation and the elimination of [Hezbollah leader Hassan] Nasrallah were carried out despite the opposition of senior officials in the defense establishment and those responsible for them in

the political echelon”.

Concerning Statements and Actions by Israeli Political and Military Officials

In June 2024, Israeli Defense Minister warned that Israel’s military is capable of taking Lebanon “back to the Stone Age.”

On 21 September 2024, Israeli Education Minister stated on live television that “Lebanon will be annihilated” and “the price of aggression from Lebanon’s territory will be paid by the State of Lebanon.”

On 27 September 2024, Israeli Prime Minister claimed that there is “a missile in every kitchen, a rocket in every garage” in Lebanon.

On 3 December 2024, the newly appointed Israeli Defense Minister warned that if the ceasefire with Hezbollah collapses, Israel would no longer distinguish between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state, proclaiming, “There will no longer be an exemption for the state of Lebanon.”

Ceasefire Violations

According to a statement by UNIFIL on 3 January 2025, operations by the Israeli military north of the UN-monitored Blue Line in southern Lebanon have continued. A report released by OCHA on 6 January 2025 concerning Israel’s ceasefire violations mentions that “Violations of the cessation of hostilities continued to be reported during the reporting period, primarily in Nabatieh and South governorates but also in areas north of the Litani river, with airstrikes recorded in Nabatieh and Bekka governorates, in addition to continued access restrictions imposed by the Israeli army to more than 60 villages and towns in southern Lebanon”.

Despite the ceasefire terms requiring Israeli troops to withdraw from southern Lebanon within 60 days, Israeli forces have remained in the area, continuing housing and infrastructure demolitions, persisting ground incursion with tanks, bulldozers and medium to heavy machine guns, preventing residents from returning, and delaying the Lebanese Army from deploying at land borders crossings in Al-Naqoura. Although the Lebanese army was able to enter Naqoura on 7 January 2025, following the Israeli military’s withdrawal, the Naqoura mayor has described the town as almost completely destroyed and uninhabitable due to the level of destruction caused by Israeli forces.

Airspace violations persist as Israeli surveillance and reconnaissance drones continue to operate at low altitudes, conducting round-the-clock monitoring and intelligence-gathering activities in further contravention of the ceasefire terms.

Additionally, Israeli airstrikes and shelling have continued in various parts of Lebanon, including areas in southern Lebanon, resulting in additional civilian casualties. In December 2024 alone, at least 33 Lebanese civilians were reported killed due to Israeli military actions during the ceasefire.

Thousands of families cannot yet return to their villages and communities due to either the extensive destruction or the continued access restrictions imposed by the Israeli military. Groups in vulnerable situations, including women and girls, persons with disability as well as refugees and migrants have remained in collective site due to limited means and restrictions to return to previous housing or to rent houses in safe areas.⁴

Lebanon has formally submitted a complaint to the United Nations Security Council, accusing Israel of repeatedly violating the ceasefire agreement. Filed through Lebanon's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, the complaint alleges that Israel carried out more than 816 ground and aerial attacks between 27 November and 22 December 2024. These attacks reportedly include the kidnapping of Lebanese citizen Imad Amhaz in Batroun, a ground incursion, and the destruction of entire villages and residential areas such as Yaroun, Aitaroun, Maroun al-Ras, and Mais al-Jabal, along with the continued targeting of the Lebanese Army, civilian objects, and civilians in locations including Sour, Barja (Chouf), Almat (Jbeil), and Ain Yacoub (Akkar), resulting in dozens of casualties.

The complaint further details attacks on vehicles, ambulance centers, and healthcare workers in Adloun (Saida), Deir Qanoun, Ras al-Ain, and Ain Baal (Sour), which resulted in the deaths of 11 rescue workers, as well as attacks on historic heritage buildings in Baalbeck and Nabatieh.

On 4 January 2025, UNIFIL issued a statement where they reported that “peacekeepers observed an IDF bulldozer destroying a blue barrel marking the line of withdrawal between Lebanon and Israel in Labbouneh, as well as an observation tower belonging to the Lebanese Armed Forces immediately beside a UNIFIL position there. The IDF’s deliberate and direct destruction of both clearly identifiable UNIFIL property and infrastructure belonging to the Lebanese Armed Forces is a flagrant violation of resolution 1701 and international law.”

On 13 January 2025, the Israeli army renewed its warning to displaced citizens across Lebanon against returning to their 72 villages in the south of Lebanon.

On 17 January, the United Nations Secretary-General stated at UNIFIL headquarters in Lebanon that “the continued occupation by the Israel [military] inside the UNIFIL area operations and the conduct of military operations in Lebanese territory are violations of resolution 1701”.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information received, we wish to express our serious concern about the grave impact of Israel’s military actions on civilians in Lebanon, including loss of life, bodily harm, destruction or damage to civilian objects, mass displacement, and loss of livelihoods and ecosystems, and environmental destruction. We are concerned that many such acts have violated international humanitarian law and undermine the right to life, the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, adequate housing, and safe drinking water and

⁴ [Lebanon: Flash Update #49 - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 5 December 2024 - Lebanon | ReliefWeb](#)

sanitation; the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to education, as well as the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

We are particularly concerned with the recent spate of large-scale damage to or destruction of civilian objects in Lebanon, including homes, transportation networks, water and sanitation facilities, healthcare facilities, and other essential services, in some instances making settlements virtually uninhabitable. In many instances, the harm to these civilian objects does not appear to be lawful under international humanitarian law, including where civilian objects are deliberately attacked; attacks are launched expecting to cause excessive civilian casualties relative to the military advantage anticipated; attacks are indiscriminate, including by the use of high explosive weapons with wide area effects in densely populated urban areas; or there is a failure to take all feasible precautions to verify that an object is military and civilian casualties would not be disproportionate. Some acts may also attract liability under international criminal law, both as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The deliberate, disproportionate and indiscriminate destruction of housing is a *prima facie* violation of the right to adequate housing as it commits many people to homelessness and living in temporary emergency shelters. Moreover, we wish to underscore that the systematic or widespread destruction of housing, including of informal settlements, may qualify as the crime of “domicide” if they form part of an attack directed against any civilian population. The resulting use of numerous school buildings as shelters also denied Lebanese children their right to education.

Moreover, the risks of unexploded ordnance, as well as the practice of booby-trapping homes, make homes unsafe and jeopardize the return of civilians displaced by the conflict, likely for lengthy periods of time after the end of hostilities. Booby traps violate humanitarian law where they are used indiscriminately. The damage and destruction of housing has plunged Lebanon into a deeper housing crisis, as the country was already facing a housing affordability crisis amidst Lebanon’s economic, social, financial and cost of living crisis, as documented by the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights after his visit to Lebanon in 2021.

We are concerned about what seems to be a pattern of accusations by Israel on the use of civilians and UN peacekeepers as human shields. While Hezbollah and other armed groups are required by international law to avoid locating military operations within or near densely populated areas, such conduct by non-State actors does not exempt Israel of their parallel obligations, under international humanitarian law, to refrain from indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, and to take all necessary measures to spare all civilians, including those who do not or could not leave the area following an evacuation notice.

We are furthermore concerned that Israel’s military displacement orders, where not justified by imperative military reasons or the security of civilians the targeting of residential areas, along with military actions precluding the safe return of civilians, may amount to forced displacement, prohibited under international law. There is also a risk that this displacement may amount to the act of deportation or forcible transfer of population, prohibited under international criminal law, especially if return to some localities becomes impossible overtime. We further recall that civilians should not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict.

Furthermore, we are concerned at the extensive destruction of livelihoods, including agricultural lands and markets, which has further strained the economic stability of affected communities throughout Lebanon. Contaminated rivers and aquifers and destroyed agricultural lands have adverse effects on crop production, local irrigation, soil fertility, food safety, water security, and overall public health. We are equally troubled by the massive volume of debris posing significant challenges for safe debris management, environmental health, and public health, including hazards from construction and demolition waste as well as potential obstacles to the return of IDPs.

We are also concerned with the unlawful destruction of religious and cultural sites under customary international humanitarian law, which also violates the right to take part in cultural life, as well as the right to freedom of religion or belief.

In addition to the above, we wish to raise serious concerns over the Israeli army's alleged indiscriminate firing of artillery shells that contain white phosphorus, in military operations in Lebanese territories along the border between Israel and Lebanon. The devastation caused by the use of white phosphorus munitions not only impacts agricultural livelihoods but also raises serious concerns about long-term food security and the right to a safe and sustainable environment. Such acts could also qualify as war crimes under international humanitarian law.

We wish to raise grave concern regarding the reported simultaneous detonation of hidden explosive devices in pagers and walkie-talkies, which prima facie appears to contravene international humanitarian law. Such an operation would constitute a war crime, given the deliberate booby-trapping of everyday civilian devices, the impossibility of confirming who possessed or was in proximity to those devices, and the consequently indiscriminate nature of the attacks. It is therefore crucial that these events be subjected to a thorough and independent investigation, with those responsible held accountable in accordance with international law.

We further wish to raise serious concerns with the attacks on healthcare facilities and health workers, which harm the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the protection afforded by medical personnel and infrastructure under customary international humanitarian law (see Annex). According to IHL and IHRL, personnel engaging in medical tasks must always be respected and protected and the wounded and sick under their care remain protected. In times of armed conflict, IHL provides rules to protect access to healthcare services. The targeting of hospitals and healthcare facilities where numerous civilians found themselves wounded and seeking refuge, contravenes the fundamental right of individuals to access essential healthcare services, a matter of acute significance during times of conflict. Undermining Lebanon's healthcare system during a period of heightened need endangers an already vulnerable population and further impedes the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid and essential services.

Concern is also expressed at the large number of casualties due to Israel's allegedly deliberate attacks on civilians, including journalists, an act which if proven would substantiate apparent war crimes under customary international humanitarian law. Any deliberate targeting of journalists constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law and seriously hinders access to information of public

interest, truth, and accountability for human rights violations, given the essential role journalists play in reporting on conflict situations and ensuring transparency for the international community. Such attacks are also prone to create a notable chilling effect on the media and self-censorship, preventing impartial, independent reporting on the hostilities and possible war crimes. Such incidents of intimidation undermine the right to freedom of opinion and expression and media freedom, hinder public scrutiny, and limit the broader community's understanding of the circumstances faced by the affected Lebanese population. In this regard, we recall that mandate holders have repeatedly expressed grave concerns to your Excellency's Government regarding attacks on journalists in the context of the current conflict and emphasized the fundamental need to ensure journalists' safety.

We remind your Excellency's Government that the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life is a *jus cogens* obligation and should be respected and protected at all times, without possible derogation or exception even in times of war or security emergencies. Furthermore, targeted attacks on civilians are prohibited under IHL and parties to conflicts must do everything feasible to verify that targets are military objectives and take all precautions to avoid and minimize incidental loss of life.

Likewise, we are concerned about the reported attacks on United Nations peacekeepers, which represent a serious violation of their inviolability under international law and United Nations Security Council resolution 1701.

We remain concerned about the significant number of children denied their right to education due to widespread school closures, either because schools have been destroyed, used as temporary shelters, or are situated in areas that remain insecure due to ongoing Israeli bombardment or occupation. The impact on children's well-being and long-term development cannot be overstated.

We also note with concern that statements by Israeli government and military officials which fail to differentiate between civilians and non-State armed, and threaten collective punishment of all Lebanese, may constitute grave violations of IHL and IHRL, including incitement to national/religious/racial hatred.

We note that Lebanon has the possibility of submitting a declaration to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) registrar accepting the court's jurisdiction over serious crimes committed on Lebanese territory since 7 October 2023.

Finally, we express our serious concern regarding the alleged numerous ceasefire violations by Israel, which increase the potential for further hostilities and harm to civilians in Lebanon.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the measures taken by Your Excellency's Government to ensure that all military operations in Lebanon are conducted in compliance with international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack.
3. Please explain what measures were taken to avoid or minimize harm caused by military operations to civilians and civilian objects in Lebanon, including homes, transportation networks, schools, healthcare facilities, and other essential infrastructure, natural resources and the environment. Please also specify what measures have been taken to address unexploded ordnance in affected areas.
4. Please provide information on the steps taken to enable the safe return of displaced persons to their homes, including efforts to facilitate the reconstruction and rehabilitation of destroyed homes and infrastructure, as well as the clearing of dangerous objects. In particular, please provide information on any measures by Your Excellency's Government taken to ensure that any restrictions imposed by the Israeli Army do not impede on the displaced persons' right to return.
5. Please provide information on any investigations carried out by Your Excellency's Government into incidents where civilian casualties and destruction of civilian objects have occurred, and the measures taken to ensure accountability and redress for victims.
6. Please explain what measures have been taken by Your Excellency's Government to ensure the safety and protection of journalists, healthcare workers, and humanitarian personnel operating in conflict-affected areas. In particular, please clarify whether there are any investigations or accountability mechanisms in place to address alleged attacks targeting these groups.
7. Please explain what measures have been taken by Your Excellency's Government to ensure the safety and protection of United Nations peacekeepers operating in conflict-affected areas. In particular, please clarify any investigations or accountability mechanisms in place to address alleged attacks targeting these groups.
8. Please explain what measures Your Excellency's Government has undertaken to respect the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, adequate housing, and safe drinking water and sanitation, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to education, cultural rights, as

well as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment during the conduct of military operations.

9. Please comment on allegations of damage or destruction of cultural, religious, and heritage sites in Lebanon, and explain what steps have been taken to avoid or mitigate such damage.
10. Please clarify what measures were taken by Your Excellency's Government to ensure that conflict-affected populations in Lebanon are able to access essential goods, services, and humanitarian assistance.
11. Please clarify what measures has your Excellency's Government taken to avoid the indiscriminate use of white phosphorus, especially in or near populated areas, including protocols implemented for minimizing civilian harm.
12. Please provide information on the reports regarding the alleged detonation by Your Excellency's Government of hidden explosive devices in civilian items (such as pagers and walkie-talkies). In particular, please elaborate on whether any investigation or accountability process has been initiated in response to these allegations.
13. Please provide information on how Your Excellency's Government is addressing allegations of ceasefire violations in Lebanon, including any ongoing or planned investigations, accountability mechanisms, or remedial measures.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter was sent to the Lebanese Republic and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Balakrishnan Rajagopal
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context

Alexandra Xanthaki
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Farida Shaheed
Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Astrid Puentes Riaño
Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Morris Tidball-Binz
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Michael Fakhri
Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Tlaleng Mofokeng
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Paula Gaviria
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons

George Katrougalos
Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order

Geneviève Savigny
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

K.P. Ashwini
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Nazila Ghanea
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Ben Saul
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Marcos A. Orellana
Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound
management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes

Pedro Arrojo-Agudo
Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to recall your Excellency's government's obligations under international human rights laws, norms and standards, as well as authoritative guidance on their interpretation.

International human rights law:

We would like to refer to article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that every individual has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The right to life constitutes a jus cogens, peremptory norm from which no derogation is permitted. It applies at all times including during armed conflicts.

We wish to recall Israel's obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991.

These obligations continue to apply in armed conflict and wherever a State exercises its jurisdiction. In particular article 11 related to the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and housing; article 12 related to the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; article 13 related to the right to education; and article 15 related to the right to take part in cultural life. Paragraph 1(a) recognizes the right of everyone to take part in cultural life. Under this provision, States Parties have also undertaken to respect the enjoyment and development of cultural practices and respect the freedom indispensable for creative activity. Further, article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirming everyone's right to freely participate in cultural life, which includes the right to access and enjoy cultural heritage in all its forms.

ICESCR requires States to "take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of the right to food" (article 11.1). While article 11(1) is subjected to progressive realization to the maximum of States available resources, article 11(2), provides "the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition", which is of immediate application. As general comment No. 12 further underlines, the obligations to respect existing access to adequate food requires State parties to refrain from taking any measures that result in preventing such access. The obligation to protect requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive persons of their access to adequate food. Whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to fulfil (provide) that right directly.

We further wish to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to CESCR's general comment No. 26 on land and economic, social and cultural rights, which emphasizes the essential role of land in the realization of a range of rights under ICESCR. In fact, the secure and equitable access to, use of and control over land for individuals and communities can be essential to eradicate hunger and poverty and to guarantee the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food and to adequate housing, as housing is often built on land used for the purpose of food production. Without such access, people could be subject to displacement and forced

eviction, which could violate their right to adequate housing.

In its general comment No. 3, CESCR clarified that preventing and eliminating homelessness is a “minimum core obligation [of States] to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of each of the rights” under the ICESCR.

In its general comment No. 4, the CESCR has stated that the right to adequate housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense by assigning to it a meaning of “merely having a roof over one’s head”, but it should rather be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. It specifies that for housing to be adequate, it needs to include the following elements, among others: availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; and location.

In its general comment No. 7, the CESCR has established that forced evictions constitute *prima facie* violations of the right to adequate housing, especially when conducted in a manner that impacts a large number of individuals. Homelessness that results from such forced evictions/displacement, are grave violations of the ICESCR. Use of force that results in mass displacement and eviction of individuals, is therefore prohibited under IHRL.

We further wish to recall the 2022 report (A/77/190) of the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing which established that the widespread or systematic destruction of homes may also constitute a crime against humanity, when committed as part of a deliberate attack directed against a civilian population. He further called on States to recognize and enforce the prohibition of these acts, referred to as “domicide”, as a distinct crime under international law, arguing that the home is afforded the same special protection as all civilian objects in international humanitarian law, such as places of worship, cultural heritage, demilitarized zones and the natural environment. He also called upon government officials and military and security forces to ensure that their actions “are compliant with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law.”

We recall the explicit recognition of the human rights to safe drinking water by the UN General Assembly (resolution 64/292) and the Human Rights Council (resolution 15/9), which derives from the right to an adequate standard of living, protected under, *inter alia*, article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 11 of ICESCR. In its general comment No. 15, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights clarified that the human right to water means that everyone is entitled to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses. Furthermore, the UN General Assembly (resolution 70/169) and the Human Rights Council (resolution 33/10) recognized that water and sanitation are two distinct but interrelated human rights. In particular, we recall explicit recognition that “the human right to sanitation entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity, while reaffirming that both rights are components of the right to an adequate standard of living”.

In addition, in its 2009 general comment No. 21 (E/C.12/GC/21), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stressed that States must refrain from interfering with the exercise of and the access to cultural practices, goods and services. The obligation of States to fulfil this right requires them to take appropriate legislative, administrative, judicial, budgetary, promotional and other measures aimed at the full realization of the right for everyone. It also recalled the right of everyone not to be subjected to any form of discrimination based on cultural identity, exclusion or forced assimilation, to express their cultural identity freely, to exercise their cultural practices and way of life and to access to their own cultural and linguistic heritage and to that of others. As stated by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, cultural heritage must be preserved, developed, enriched and transmitted to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, in order to encourage creativity in all its diversity and to inspire a genuine dialogue between cultures. Such obligations include the care, preservation and restoration of historical sites, monuments, works of art and literary works, among others (E/C.12/GC/21, paragraph 50(a)). This is also enshrined within numerous other international legal instruments, which emphasize the duty of States to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage and ensure its protection.

In this regard, we wish to recall the 1972 *Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, which serves as a foundational instrument, outlining the obligations of State parties to protect and preserve cultural heritage sites of universal value for present and future generations. Article 4 of the 1972 Convention states that the duty of the state is “to protect the cultural and natural heritage”. The 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* further reinforces this duty, urging States to take measures to safeguard the intangible cultural practices, expressions, and traditions that contribute to cultural identity. These protections extend to cultural heritage found in all its forms—tangible and intangible, movable and immovable—and include cultural, religious, and historical sites of significance. In addition, the 2003 UNESCO *Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* asserts that States must take all appropriate measures to prevent and halt the intentional destruction of cultural heritage, regardless of its location or status of inscription on an international heritage list. This Declaration highlights the responsibility of States not to intentionally destroy their own heritage, “whether or not it is inscribed on a list maintained by UNESCO or another international organization” (section VI), to act decisively to avoid, stop, and suppress acts that endanger the integrity of cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations may benefit from its preservation.

States have a duty not to destroy damage or alter cultural heritage, and to take measures to preserve/safeguard cultural heritage from destruction or damage by third parties (A/HRC/17/38, in particular paras. 78 and 80 and A/HRC/31/59, paras 52, 53, 60).

In line with these international standards, the United Nations Human Rights Council has reiterated in several resolutions that the destruction of cultural heritage may severely impact the enjoyment of cultural rights and all human rights. In resolution 33/20 (2016), the Human Rights Council stressed the irreversible harm caused by the destruction of cultural heritage and its devastating impact on communities and their identities. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the destruction of cultural heritage not only violates cultural rights but can also exacerbate social,

political, and economic instability, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations. As such, international law calls on States to take preventive measures, including the enactment of laws and policies that criminalize the intentional destruction of cultural sites, and to ensure accountability for those responsible for such actions.

The Special Rapporteur on cultural rights has also emphasized that the protection of cultural heritage is integral to the broader framework of human rights, particularly the right to participation in cultural life. Destruction or damage to cultural heritage undermines this right and impedes the collective memory and identity of communities. Furthermore, the destruction of cultural heritage may violate the right to a remedy for those whose cultural heritage is harmed or lost. The reports of the Special Rapporteur underline the importance of free, prior, and informed consent from affected communities before any decisions are made regarding the destruction or alteration of cultural heritage sites, especially those of religious or cultural significance. In accordance with the principles of the UDHR and other international human rights instruments, States are urged to take preventive measures and ensure the legal protection of cultural heritage against intentional harm.

In particular, we draw the attention of Your Excellency's Government to the reports of successive Special Rapporteurs in the field of cultural rights, particularly regarding the right to access and enjoy cultural heritage (A/HRC/17/38) and the intentional destruction of cultural heritage (A/71/317). As cultural heritage represents values linked to the cultural identity of individuals and groups, access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage also includes "contributing to the identification, interpretation, and development of cultural heritage, as well as to the design and implementation of preservation and safeguarding policies and programs." Therefore, consultation with all concerned parties is essential before deciding on the destruction of sites of cultural or religious significance (A/HRC/17/38, paras. 58 and 79; A/71/317, paras. 13 and 58). Mandate holders in the field of cultural rights have recommended that States recognize and value the diversity of cultural heritages present in their territories and under their jurisdiction, and acknowledge, respect, and protect the choices of individuals and groups to feel associated with (or not) specific elements of cultural heritage.

Given the largely irreversible nature of the destruction of cultural heritage - which constitutes a prima facie violation of cultural rights - effective efforts must be made to prevent and stop it (A/71/317, para. 5) in the best delays.

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the ICCPR, ratified by your Excellency's Government on 3 October 1991. We recall article 26, which states that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. Article 27 of ICCPR provides that in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, "to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language". This is strengthened by article 15 of the ICESCR, which recognizes the right of everyone to take part in cultural life. As stressed by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 15, paragraph 1(a), of "the Covenant also includes the right of minorities and of persons belonging to minorities to take part in the cultural life of society, and also to conserve, promote and develop their own culture. This right entails the obligation of States parties to recognize, respect and

protect minority cultures as an essential component of the identity of the States themselves. Consequently, minorities have the right to their cultural diversity, traditions, customs, religion, forms of education, languages, communication media (press, radio, television, internet) and other manifestations of their cultural identity and membership” (general comment 21, para. 32).

We would also like to refer your Excellency’s Government to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Your Excellency’s Government on 3 October 1991, in particular article 2 related to non-discrimination; article 6 related to the right to life; article 17 related to the protection from arbitrary or unlawful interference with the home; article 18 related to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief; article 19 related to the freedom of expression.

Article 6 states that every human being has the inherent right to life and article 2 requires States to respect this right without distinction of any kind, “such as race, colour, sex language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.

In its general comment 36, paragraph 2, the Human Rights Committee notes that article 6 of the ICCPR recognizes and protects the right to life of all human beings, without derogation even in situations of armed conflict. Adding that the inherent right to life and its effective protection are prerequisites for the enjoyment of all other human rights. In addition, the Committee states in paragraph 64 that “practices inconsistent with international humanitarian law, entailing a risk to the lives of civilians and other persons protected by international humanitarian law, including the targeting of civilians, civilian objects and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, indiscriminate attacks, failure to apply the principles of precaution and proportionality, and the use of human shields would also violate article 6 of the Covenant. States parties should, in general, disclose the criteria for attacking with lethal force individuals or objects whose targeting is expected to result in deprivation of life, including the legal basis for specific attacks, the process of identification of military targets and combatants or persons taking a direct part in hostilities, the circumstances in which relevant means and methods of warfare have been used, and whether less harmful alternatives were considered. They must also investigate alleged or suspected violations of article 6 in situations of armed conflict in accordance with the relevant international standards.” A failure to investigate and bring perpetrators of such violations to justice could in and of itself give rise to a separate breach of the ICCPR.

Furthermore, the Human Rights Committee states that measures called for addressing adequate conditions for protecting the right to life include, where necessary, measures designed to ensure access without delay by individuals to essential goods and services such as food. The Human Rights Committee recognized that the right to life should not be interpreted narrowly, noting that it places not only negative obligations on States but also positive obligations to ensure access to the basic conditions necessary to sustain life. It has affirmed that measures that restrict access to basic and life-saving services, such as food, are contrary to article 6 of ICCPR that protects the right to life.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right “to seek, receive and impart

information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline, protects the freedom of the press as one of its core elements and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend.

In its general comment No. 34, the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11). The Committee states that article 19 also covers the right of a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion and a corresponding right of the public to receive media output.

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that "all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress" (para. 23).

The right to religious practices and manifestations is provided by article 18(1) of the ICCPR which stresses that "[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom [...] either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." General comment No. 22 of the Human Rights Committee further explains that "[t]he freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts. The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, as well as various practices integral to such acts, including the building of places of worship [...] the display of symbols [...]"

The 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55) states in its article 2(1) that: "[n]o one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on grounds of religion or other belief." According to article 4(1), "[a]ll States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms [...]"

While concerns have been raised that some of Israel's measures may be perceived as collective punishment and incitement based on national and religious identity, we further wish to refer to Israel's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by Israel on 31 January 1979, in particular article 4 related to the incitement of racial hatred and related acts.

In December 2018, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP). Article 6 of UNDROP guarantees peasants and other people working in rural areas the right to life, liberty, and personal security. This includes protection from violence, harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention. In addition, article 15 of UNDROP affirms the right of peasants and other people working in rural areas to land, water, and other natural resources essential for their livelihoods.

We also wish to refer to Human Rights Council resolution 48/13 of 8 October 2021 and General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 29 July 2022, which recognize the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right.

We would also like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment as detailed in the 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (A/HRC/37/59). The principles state that States should ensure a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in order to respect, protect and fulfil human rights (principle 1); States should respect, protect and fulfil human rights in order to ensure a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (principle 2).

Any use of force by a State that causes the displacement of individuals in another State—whether internally or across borders—must fully comply with the applicable norms of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, including guidelines on internally displaced persons and relevant provisions of refugee law. We would thus like to refer to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2), which establishes that internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced (principle 1(1)). All authorities and international actors shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to displacement of persons (principle 5). Every human being shall have the right to be protected against being arbitrarily displaced from his or her home, including due to serious violations of human rights, discrimination and fear of persecution (principle 6). Prior to any decision requiring the displacement of persons, the authorities concerned shall ensure that all feasible alternatives are explored in order to avoid displacement altogether. Displacement shall not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected (principle 8). States are under a particular obligation to protect against the displacement of indigenous peoples, minorities, peasants, pastoralists and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands (principle 9). Every human being has the inherent right to life, and internally displaced persons shall be protected in particular against genocide, murder, summary or arbitrary executions, and enforced disappearances including abduction or unacknowledged detention, threatening or resulting in death; threat and incitement to commit any of the foregoing acts are also prohibited (principle 10(1)). Attacks or other acts of violence against internally displaced persons who do not or no longer participate in hostilities are prohibited in all circumstances (principle 10(2)). Special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care, as well as

appropriate counselling for victims of sexual and other abuses (principle 20(2)).

International humanitarian law:

Israel is bound by the obligations set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of the civilian population during armed conflicts, and customary international humanitarian law applicable throughout Lebanon (see ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Rules). While Israel is not a party to additional protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, its key provisions, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution, reflect customary international humanitarian law in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

We also recall that under international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols, which mostly reflect customary international law, parties to an armed conflict must always distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives, and must direct their operations only against military objectives through direct and unequivocal application of the principle of distinction. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited as the principle of proportionality prohibits attacks that may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, or damage to civilian objects, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

Killings resulting from a direct attack against a civilian (rule 1), from an indiscriminate attack (rule 11) and from an attack against military objectives causing excessive loss of civilian life (rule 14), are all unlawful and prohibited by the rules on the conduct of hostilities. In this regard, we emphasize that common article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions prohibits at any time and in any place whatsoever “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds” against all civilians and persons *hors de combat*.

We recall that ICRC Customary IHL rule 20 provides that “Each party to the conflict must give effective advance warning of attacks which may affect the civilian population, unless circumstances do not permit”. This rule reaffirms the principle of precaution in attack, mandating that warring parties adopt all feasible measures to avoid or minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects (rule 15). We also note that “Each party to the conflict must, to the extent feasible, avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas” (rule 23).

We also wish to highlight that ICRC Customary IHL rules 109-111 obligates parties to armed conflict to respect and protect the wounded, the sick, and those caring for them at all times. Rules 25-32 require respect and protection for medical and humanitarian personnel, facilities, and units, which must not be attacked or hindered from performing their humanitarian functions.

We also wish to underscore that ICRC Customary IHL rule 34 provides that “Civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.”

We further recall that according to common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, civilians shall not be subject to violence and treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

We note that ICRC Customary IHL rule 129 prohibits ordering the displacement of the civilian population, in whole or in part, for reasons related to the conflict, unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.

We further underscore that children should be granted special respect and protection during conflict (ICRC Customary IHL rule 135). The protections for children under IHL include: sheltering them from hostilities; maintaining family unity; and ensuring the necessary care, relief, or protection for those caught in hostilities and evacuation from besieged areas.

Additionally, the specific protection, health and assistance needs of women and girls affected by armed conflict must be respected (ICRC Customary IHL rule 134), including in the light of the specific rules relating to the prohibition of sexual violence (rule 99) and the rights of women and girls with disabilities (rule 138). Read in conjunction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Israel on 28 September 2012, States should take particular under consideration the specific requirements of women and girls with disabilities. We also like to remind your Excellency's Government that ICRC Customary IHL rule 138 and article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires special respect and protection for persons with disabilities during armed conflict.

We would also like to recall that ICRC Customary IHL rules 38-40 requires parties to conflict to respect cultural property, including places of worship, and take special care not to damage it unless it is a military objective; normally prohibits the use of certain cultural property for military purposes; and protects cultural property against seizure, destruction or theft.

We underline that the respect for pluralism and diversity of religious practices encompasses the positive obligation of enabling worshippers to access religious sites and peacefully engage in religious ceremonies without discrimination.

We would finally like to recall that ICRC Customary IHL rule 33 prohibits directing attacks against personnel and objects involved in peacekeeping missions. Articles 7 and 9 of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, to which the State of Israel is not a state party to, prohibit attacks against UN personnel, equipment or premises. Additionally, article 8 of the Rome Statute similarly states that: "Intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as long as they are entitled to the protection given to civilians or civilian objects under the international law of armed conflict."

Finally, we remind Your Excellency's Government of the many resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council that reaffirm that any measures taken to combat terrorism or violent extremism must

comply with the obligations of States under international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law.⁵ Counter-terrorism measures must also conform to fundamental requirements of legality, proportionality, necessity and non-discrimination. Failure to respect these principles can have exceptionally deleterious effects on the protection of fundamental rights, particularly for minorities, historically marginalized communities, and civil society. The General Assembly has unanimously recognized that effectively combatting terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights are not competing but complementary and mutually reinforcing goals in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/HRC/60/288).

⁵ Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003), 1566 (2004), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2242 (2015), 2341 (2017), 2354 (2017), 2368 (2017), 2370 (2017), 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017); Human Rights Council resolution 35/34; and General Assembly resolutions 49/60, 51/210, 72/123 and 72/180, among others.