

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; 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 on the human rights of internally displaced persons; the Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Ref.: AL ISR 10/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

16 July 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; 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 on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/20, 53/4, 61/16, 59/12, 57/7 and 58/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the impact of the hostilities that started on the 8th of October 2023 and that escalated significantly on the 23rd of September 2024 when Israel launched Operation Northern Arrows, conducting extensive air strikes across Lebanon, killing and wounding thousands of civilians. A cessation of hostilities arrangement came into effect on 27 November 2024 and was subsequently transmitted to the Security Council on 29 November. Nevertheless, military operations, including air and drone strikes by the Israel Defense Forces, have continued on an almost daily basis. These hostilities re-escalated significantly on 2 March 2026, and have severely impacted civilians protected under international humanitarian law. It is reported that women and girls in particular have suffered disproportionate and severe consequences as a result of indiscriminate attacks, forced displacement, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the denial of access to essential services. This situation has been exacerbated by public statements from senior Israeli officials that incite or normalize violence against Lebanese women.

Such concerns have previously been raised in ISR 1/2025. We regret that no response was received from your Excellency's Government to these serious concerns.

According to the information received:

Indiscriminate killings

As of 30 June 2026, since Israel's escalation of hostilities against Lebanon, in addition to men and children, including girls, 391 women have been killed and 1449 injured. Moreover, 135 health care workers have been killed and 406

injured.¹ Multiple instances have been documented in which entire families, including women and children, have been killed inside their homes in Israeli strikes on residential buildings.² While most of the names of women and girls who lost their lives have not been released, reports indicate that female journalists, activists, and social workers were among those targeted.

It has also been reported that on 3 March 2026, the Israeli military used artillery-fired white phosphorus munitions over homes in the southern Lebanese town of Yohmor, including in residential parts of the town. Eight images showing airburst white phosphorus munitions being deployed and civil defense workers responding to fires in at least two homes and one car in that area have been allegedly verified and geolocated. Studies indicate a correlation between the use of white phosphorus and an increase in birth defects in children born to mothers exposed to it during pregnancy.

Forced displacement

As of June 2026, it is estimated that 620,000 women and girls have been displaced since 2 March, with 85% living outside formal shelters and facing heightened protection risks.³ Around 16,000 pregnant women are among those forced to flee, many of whom are giving birth in unsafe and overcrowded conditions without access to a midwife. Disruptions to services and damage to health infrastructure are removing access to essential care at the time it is most needed. It is also reported that 632 collective shelters are dangerously congested, lacking basic supplies and privacy, creating severe protection risks, including the risk of violence against women and girls.⁴

It is further alleged that Israeli forces remained present in five positions and two buffer zones in southern Lebanon following the cessation of hostilities arrangement of 27 November 2024, notwithstanding the requirement that they withdraw from Lebanese territory. It is further alleged that, following the renewed escalation of hostilities in March 2026, Israeli forces expanded their military presence and reportedly seized additional areas in southern Lebanon. Residents in southern Lebanon have not only been forcefully displaced but have also been indefinitely barred from returning to villages under Israeli occupation, including buffer zones covering approximately 6% of the Lebanese territory. Displacement orders issued by the Israeli military to residents of the southern suburbs of Beirut between 11 and 15 March stated that the Israeli military “will not hesitate to target anyone who is present near Hezbollah members, facilities,

¹ <https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/images/Prevention/PHEOC/Cumulative%20Emergency%20Report/30-6-2026.pdf>

² HYPERLINK "https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/lebanon/update-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-lebanon-23-04-2026.pdf" <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/lebanon/update-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-lebanon-23-04-2026.pdf>

³ HYPERLINK "https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/acaps-briefing-note-lebanon-escalation-conflict-and-forced-displacement-southern-areas-09-june-2026" <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/acaps-briefing-note-lebanon-escalation-conflict-and-forced-displacement-southern-areas-09-june-2026>

⁴ HYPERLINK "https://www.unfpa.org/resources/flash-appeal-emergency-response-lebanon-updated-march-august-2026" <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/flash-appeal-emergency-response-lebanon-updated-march-august-2026>

or means of combat,” suggesting that mere physical proximity to persons designated by Israel as targets might legitimize being killed. On 22 March, Israel’s Defense Minister, Israel Katz, issued a statement announcing that he and Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have “ordered the acceleration of the demolition of Lebanese houses in the border villages in order to thwart threats to Israeli communities - in accordance with the Beit Hanoun and Rafah models in Gaza.”⁵

Deteriorating conditions of life and denial of access to basic services

Following Israel’s ground incursions in Lebanon and due to the disruption of essential protection and justice services, women and girls are finding it harder to report violations and to seek protection.⁶ Overcrowded shelters, inadequate lighting, lack of privacy and of sex-segregated sanitation facilities significantly heighten the risks of violence against women and girls, make it difficult to maintain hygiene, including during menstruation and create particularly harsh conditions for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women as well as older women and women with disabilities.⁷ As women are usually primary caregivers, displacement and the collapse of essential services force them to provide care under extremely difficult conditions, often neglecting their own needs. With an estimated 435 public schools forced to function as shelters, the education of over 115,000 students, approximately half of them being girls, has been abruptly halted.⁸ Due to inadequate sanitary conditions, there is also a reported increased trend of acute watery diarrhea, which is particularly dangerous for persons already facing additional vulnerabilities, including women and girls.⁹

It is reported that six hospitals in Tyre, Bint Jbeil, Hasbaya, and Nabatieh districts have ceased maternity delivery services for pregnant women following the escalation, which places additional pressure on the remaining functional facilities.¹⁰ No institutional deliveries were allegedly recorded in Nabatieh and Bint Jbeil districts during March–April 2026,¹¹ which can be attributed both to

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- 5 HYPERLINK "https://x.com/israel_katz/status/2035668503554879862?s=61"https://x.com/israel_katz/status/2035668503554879862?s=61
- 6 HYPERLINK "<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-briefing/2026/03/press-briefing-by-un-women-on-the-situation-for-women-and-girls-in-lebanon>"<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-briefing/2026/03/press-briefing-by-un-women-on-the-situation-for-women-and-girls-in-lebanon>
- 7 HYPERLINK "<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/flash-appeal-emergency-response-lebanon-updated-march-august-2026>"<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/flash-appeal-emergency-response-lebanon-updated-march-august-2026>
- 8 HYPERLINK "<https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/an-average-of-19000-children-displaced-daily-as-escalating-violence-uproots-20-per-cent-of-lebanons-population-in-three-weeks/>"<https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/an-average-of-19000-children-displaced-daily-as-escalating-violence-uproots-20-per-cent-of-lebanons-population-in-three-weeks/>
- 9 HYPERLINK "<https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167621>"<https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167621>
- 10 HYPERLINK "<https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/who-lebanon-health-emergency-situation-update-25-22-may-2026>"<https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/who-lebanon-health-emergency-situation-update-25-22-may-2026>
- 11 HYPERLINK "<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA%20Lebanon%20Situation%20Report%20%289-22%20June%202026%29.pdf>"<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA%20Lebanon%20Situation%20Report%20%289-22%20June%202026%29.pdf>

displacement and attacks on health facilities deterring women from seeking facility-based care. For pregnant women and newborns, delays in care can mean the difference between life and death.

Statements of Israeli highest officials explicitly targeting Lebanese women and girls

On 9 June 2026, Israeli sources reported that National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir proposed thinking “outside the box about Hezbollah,” and “arresting their women and youth and taking them to terrorist prisons.” Such remarks are particularly concerning in light of longstanding allegations by United Nations mechanisms and human rights organizations documenting sexual violence and other forms of ill-treatment committed against women and girls held in Israeli detention facilities.¹²

On 19 June 2026, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir directly targeted Lebanese women and, in particular, mothers, stating on social media that “[f]or every tear of an Israeli mother, a thousand Lebanese mothers must weep. All of Lebanon must burn!”¹³ Also on 19 June, the Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich wrote on social media that there is “[t]ime to speak with fire. To open the gates of hell,”¹⁴ which similarly suggests calling for massive scale, indiscriminate destruction and killings.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information received, we wish to express grave concern regarding the allegations described above. They raise serious concerns regarding compliance with the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in attack, as well as international human rights law, including the non-derogable right to life protected under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Israel ratified on 3 October 1991. We emphasize that deliberate attacks on civilians, and indiscriminate attacks, are prohibited under international humanitarian law and parties to conflicts must do everything feasible to verify that targets are military objectives and take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize incidental loss of civilian life. The allegations concerning the use of artillery-fired white phosphorus munitions over residential areas are particularly alarming given the risk of severe burns, respiratory injuries and death of persons exposed, as well as in light of their possible additional impact on the health of expecting mothers and children, including girls. We must stress that information received also indicates that women and girls have suffered not only the direct consequences of hostilities but also distinct and foreseeable forms of sex-specific harm.

[pdf/UNFPA%20Lebanon%20Situation%20Report%20%289-22%20June%202026%29.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/conflict-related-sexual-violence-report-of-the-secretary-general-s-2026-321/)

12 HYPERLINK "https://www.un.org/unispal/document/conflict-related-sexual-violence-report-of-the-secretary-general-s-2026-321/"<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/conflict-related-sexual-violence-report-of-the-secretary-general-s-2026-321/>

13 HYPERLINK "https://x.com/itamarbengvir/status/2067865510281170957"<https://x.com/itamarbengvir/status/2067865510281170957>

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Furthermore, the principle of proportionality prohibits attacks expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, or damage to civilian objects that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. The obligation of precautions further requires that all feasible precautions be taken in the choice of means and methods of attack and in the conduct of attacks to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental civilian harm.

With regard to allegations concerning the displacement of population in the context of Israel's occupation of parts of Southern Lebanon, we recall articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which Israel ratified on 6 July 1951 and which contain general prohibitions on individual and mass forcible transfers and the destruction of civilian property except under the narrow circumstances provided therein. The reported prevention of civilians from returning to their homes, the establishment of a unilateral buffer zones, and the widespread demolition of residential housing 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. We further recall that civilians should not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict.

We are further concerned that internally displaced persons appear to have been prevented from returning to areas within Israel's unilaterally declared buffer zone. We recall that evacuation is an extreme and exceptional measure that must be construed narrowly, justified by valid and compelling reasons and remain strictly temporary. Civilians have a right to voluntarily return in safety to their homes as soon as the circumstances justifying their displacement have ceased.

In particular, we are deeply concerned that the allegations described above, including displacement orders indicating that any person present near Hezbollah members, facilities or means of combat may be targeted, together with public statements concerning the demolition of residential buildings in border villages, may be interpreted as suggesting that persons or civilian objects may lose protection solely on the basis of presumed affiliation or proximity to military targets, without the individualized assessment required under international humanitarian law. Such an approach raises serious concerns regarding compliance with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack.

Forced displacement both exacerbates the pre-existing vulnerabilities of women and girls and creates new forms of violence and harm arising from it. These consequences are well established, objectively foreseeable and directly attributable to the displacement and the conditions resulting from it. Where such conditions are created or maintained by a party exercising effective control over the affected territory or population, that party is responsible for them under international humanitarian law and applicable international human rights law.

In this context, we are deeply concerned by the reported conditions faced by displaced women and girls in Lebanon living in overcrowded shelters lacking privacy, adequate sanitation, and security. The destruction of health-care facilities and obstruction of access to those that remain have further exposed women and girls to sex-specific health harms, particularly in the area of reproductive and maternal health care. We wish to recall that article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991, obliges States to ensure women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, while article 10(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Israel on the same date, recognizes that mothers should be accorded special protection before and after childbirth. We further recall that article 12 of the ICESCR protects the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and that this right and corresponding obligations continue to apply during armed conflict. We are further concerned that forced displacement negatively impacts the rights of girls and other children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991.

We are also seriously alarmed by the reported statements of senior Israeli officials explicitly targeting women in Lebanon and, in particular, mothers, dehumanizing them on the basis of their nationality and sex, inciting violence against them, legitimizing collective punishment and reinforcing an environment conducive to sex-based violence. Such statements are particularly troubling when made by senior public officials exercising authority over, or capable of influencing, military and security policy during an ongoing armed conflict and may violate article 20 of the ICCPR.

We urge all parties to fully and immediately comply with international law, the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 and the 2024 cessation of hostilities arrangement, fully respect Lebanese sovereignty, and take concrete steps towards the protection of civilians, accountability and a durable peace.

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, precautions in attack and the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks.
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.

4. Please indicate whether any investigations have been initiated into the reported killings and injuries of civilians, including women and girls, as well as into attacks affecting residential buildings and other civilian objects. If so, please provide details regarding their scope, status and any accountability measures taken, as well as the availability of redress for victims.
5. Please provide detailed information regarding the reported use of artillery-fired white phosphorus munitions in Yohmor on 3 March 2026, including assessments undertaken of their short- and long-term health consequences. 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.
6. Please provide information on the measures taken to minimize the specific and disproportionate impact of the aggression on women and girls in Lebanon, and the measures taken to ensure that displaced women and girls are able to access safe shelters, maternal, reproductive and basic health care, and psychosocial support.
7. Please explain the measures taken to protect hospitals, maternity facilities, medical personnel and ambulances during military operations and to ensure the continuity of maternal and neonatal health services, particularly in light of reports that six hospitals ceased maternity services due to Israeli attacks.
8. Please also indicate what measures have been taken to ensure compliance with articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the prohibition of forced displacement under international law, and to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced civilians, including efforts to facilitate the reconstruction and rehabilitation of destroyed homes and infrastructure, as well as the clearing of dangerous objects.
9. Please indicate whether the statements made by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich quoted in this letter represent the official position or policy of the Government of Israel. Please further explain what measures have been taken to ensure that public officials refrain from statements that may dehumanize women, encourage collective punishment, incite discrimination or violence against women and girls, or otherwise undermine Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic 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 to clarify the issues in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter has also sent to the Permanent Mission of the Lebanese Republic.

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

Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

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

Koldo Casla
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

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

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

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the following provisions of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Continued applicability of international human rights law during armed conflict

We wish to recall at the outset that international human rights law continues to apply during situations of armed conflict. Israel is a party to, inter alia, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified on 3 October 1991; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified on 3 October 1991; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified on 3 October 1991; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified on 3 October 1991.

We further recall that, in its advisory opinions on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* of 9 July 2004, the *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* of 19 July 2024, and the *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory* of 22 October 2025, the International Court of Justice reaffirmed the extraterritorial applicability of international human rights obligations in circumstances where a State exercises jurisdiction outside its territory. The Human Rights Committee has similarly affirmed, in its General Comment No. 31 (2004), that States parties must respect and ensure the rights laid down in the ICCPR to anyone within their power or effective control, even if not situated within the territory of the State party (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13, para. 10). International human rights law and international humanitarian law therefore apply concurrently and provide complementary protection to persons affected by armed conflict.

Right to life

The alleged attacks resulting in mass killings of civilians, including women and girls, appear in contravention with the right to life protected under international human rights law, specifically article 6 of the ICCPR as well as under international humanitarian law, including common article 3 of the Four Geneva Conventions, ratified by Israel on 6 July 1951. 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.

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 “[e]ach 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 “[e]ach party to the conflict must, to the extent feasible, avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas” (rule 23).

We also underscore that ICRC Customary IHL rule 34 provides that “[c]ivilian 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 recall the analysis of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in the report on his visit to Lebanon (A/HRC/62/37/Add.1), in which he emphasized that, although Hezbollah is a party to the non-international armed conflict with Israel, this does not render all of its members lawful military objectives at all times. Under international humanitarian law, civilians are protected against direct attack unless, and for such time as, they directly participate in hostilities. Likewise, only members of an organized armed group who assume a continuous combat function may be targeted on that basis. Individuals whose involvement is limited to political, administrative, social or other non-combat functions, as well as civilian supporters, retain protection against direct attack unless and for such time as they directly participate in hostilities. Accordingly, attacks directed against persons solely on the basis of their presumed affiliation with Hezbollah, without establishing that they constitute lawful military objectives under international humanitarian law, would be inconsistent with the principle of distinction (para.27).

Furthermore, civilian objects, including residential buildings, are protected against attack unless and for such time as they qualify as military objectives under international humanitarian law. A residential building may become a military objective only where, by its nature, location, purpose or use, it makes an effective contribution to military action and its destruction, capture or neutralization offers a definite military advantage in the circumstances ruling at the time. The presence of members of an organised armed group, including those assuming a continuous combat function, does not, in itself, deprive the surrounding civilian population or civilian objects of the protection afforded under international humanitarian law. Even where a building, or part thereof, constitutes a military objective, any attack remains subject to the principles of proportionality and precautions in attack. Accordingly, parties to the conflict must refrain from attacks expected to cause incidental civilian death, injury or damage to

civilian objects that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, take all feasible precautions to avoid or minimize incidental civilian harm, and cancel or suspend an attack where it becomes apparent that these requirements cannot be met (A/HRC/62/37/Add.1, para.52).

Additionally, article 6 of the ICCPR 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 No. 36, the Human Rights Committee stated 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.” (CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 64).

The Human Rights Committee has interpreted States parties’ obligations under article 6 as extending to all persons subject to their jurisdiction, including persons over whose enjoyment of the right to life a State exercises power or effective control, and also to persons outside the State’s territory whose right to life is affected by the State’s military or other activities in a direct and reasonably foreseeable manner (CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 63). In this context, allegations of lethal operations affecting civilians abroad may engage the State’s obligations under article 6 ICCPR, alongside the applicable rules of international humanitarian law.

Article 16 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, provides that the wounded and sick, as well as the infirm and expectant mothers, shall be the object of protection and respect. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons from occupied territory, regardless of their motive, subject only to the limited exceptions expressly provided therein. Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits any destruction by an occupying power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, the State, public authorities or social or cooperative organizations, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that no protected person may be punished for an offence that he or she has not personally committed and prohibits collective penalties and all measures of intimidation or terrorism.

We also recall that the Security Council, in its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, expressed explicit concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed

conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognized the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation. Similar concern has been repeatedly voiced in resolutions 1889 (2009), 2122 (2013), or 2242 (2015).

Prohibition of discrimination against women and girls, including during times of conflict

Under articles 2 and 3 of the CEDAW, State parties undertake to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure the effective protection of women's rights through appropriate measures. The CEDAW Committee in general recommendation No. 35 (2017) observed that gender-based violence against women is included under article 1 prohibition (CEDAW/C/GC/35, art. 21). General recommendation No. 19 of the CEDAW Committee (1992) in paragraph 6 defines gender-based violence as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" with particularly the latter being often the case in armed conflicts.

Moreover, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has affirmed, in its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, that States parties' obligations under CEDAW continue to apply during conflict and states of emergency and that conflict situations exacerbate existing inequalities and place women at heightened risk of various forms of violence (CEDAW/C/GC/30, paras 2 and 8). The same recommendation also stresses States' obligations of providing internally displaced women and girls with adequate protections.

Housing and other elements of the right to an adequate standard of living, and domicile

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; 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 (E/C.12/GC/26, 2022), and the report on land and housing by the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing (A/80/351, 2025). Both documents emphasize the essential role of land in the realization of a range of rights under ICESCR. 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.

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.

Right to the highest attainable standard of health and the protection of health-care facilities and personnel

Article 12 of the ICESCR recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has affirmed, in its general comment No. 14 (2000), that the right to health contains the interrelated and essential elements of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality. The Committee has further affirmed that States have an obligation to respect the right to health by refraining from denying or limiting equal access to preventive, curative and palliative health services and from unlawfully polluting air, water and soil, including through the use or testing of weapons (E/C.12/2000/4, paras. 10 and 34).

Article 18 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases may in no circumstances be the object of attack and shall always be respected and protected by parties to the conflict. Article 20 further provides that persons regularly and solely engaged in the operation and administration of civilian hospitals, including personnel engaged in the search for, removal and transporting of and caring for wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected.

Regarding maternal healthcare, article 12(2) of the CEDAW, specifically requires States parties to ensure women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. We further recall article 10(2) of the ICESCR, according to which special protection should be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has affirmed, in its general recommendation No. 24 (1999), that States parties must ensure women's right

to safe motherhood and emergency obstetric services and allocate to these services the maximum extent of available resources (A/54/38/Rev.1, para. 27).

Protection of children, including girls

Article 6 of the CRC recognizes that every child has the inherent right to life and requires States parties to ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child. Article 24 recognizes the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and requires States parties to pursue full implementation of this right, including by taking appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality and to ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers. Article 28 recognizes the right of the child to education.

We further recall that, under article 38 of the CRC, States parties undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts that are relevant to children and to take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict. The destruction, closure or use of schools as collective shelters and the resulting prolonged disruption of education may have particularly serious consequences for girls. Such disruption may increase girls' exposure to child marriage, sexual exploitation, trafficking, economic exploitation and other forms of violence and may result in long-term exclusion from education.

Prohibition of the incitement to violence, including against women and girls

We further wish to express our deep concern regarding the violation of legal standards applicable to the alleged statements by senior public officials explicitly targeting Lebanese women and, in particular, mothers.

Under article 20(1) of the ICCPR, "[a]ny propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law." Article 20(2) of the ICCPR requires that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence be prohibited by law. Article 2 of CEDAW requires States parties to pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, and therefore, renders statements calling for such discrimination unacceptable. In particular, it obligates States to "refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation." The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in its general recommendation No. 35 (2017), has affirmed that States may be responsible for acts and omissions of their organs and agents that constitute violence against women, including acts or omissions of officials in the executive, legislative and judicial branches. (CEDAW/C/GC/35, para. 22).

We further recall the six-part threshold test set out in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, which identifies the context, status of the speaker, intent, content and form of the speech, extent of its dissemination and likelihood, including imminence, of resulting harm as relevant considerations. We wish to emphasize that women do not lose their civilian status or entitlement to protection

under international humanitarian law because of their nationality, family relationships or perceived association with members of an armed group (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4).

Prohibition of arbitrary displacement

We would further like to recall the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which establish that all authorities shall respect their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to the displacement of persons. The Guiding Principles clarify that the prohibition of arbitrary displacement includes displacement based on policies of apartheid, “ethnic cleansing” or similar practices aimed at/or resulting in altering the ethnic, religious, or racial composition of the affected population, in situations of armed conflict, unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand, and when it is used as collective punishment. They also set out specific protections for internally displaced persons, including non-discrimination, the right to protection and assistance, and the rights to life, family and adequate standard of living. The Guiding Principles further state that special attention should be paid to the health and 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.

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.

Duty to investigate the violations

We wish to recall the duty of states to effectively and independently investigate the grave violations of fundamental human rights of women and girls. The Human Rights Committee stressed that “[i]nvestigations into allegations of violations of article 6 must always be independent, impartial, prompt, thorough, effective, credible and transparent” and that full reparation should be granted to victims (CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 28). The Committee further specified that permitting or failing to take appropriate measures or to exercise due diligence to prevent, punish, investigate and bring perpetrators to justice could give rise to a breach of the Covenant (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 15).

Violations of the right to life under international human rights law and international humanitarian law give rise to an obligation to ensure prompt, thorough, effective, independent, impartial and transparent investigations, to prosecute those responsible, where appropriate, and to provide victims and their families with effective remedy, including adequate, effective and prompt reparation. Serious violations of international humanitarian law may also constitute war crimes and give rise to individual criminal responsibility under international criminal law, including for military commanders and other superiors.

Moreover, the Fourth Geneva Convention requires States to search for and prosecute persons alleged to have committed grave breaches (art. 146). Responsibility may extend beyond direct perpetrators to those who ordered, authorized, or otherwise

bear responsibility, including under command/superior responsibility where commanders knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that subordinates were committing or about to commit violations and failed to take necessary and reasonable measures within their power to prevent such acts or to submit the matter for investigation and prosecution (*see* rules 152 and 153 of the International Committee of the Red Cross Customary International Humanitarian Law Study).

The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death provides that investigations into potentially unlawful deaths must be “prompt, effective, thorough, independent, impartial and transparent.” (HR/PUB/17/4). With regard to the situation of children, including girls, the Committee on the Rights of the Child also stressed that States have special obligations of due diligence to investigate and to punish those responsible as well as to provide access to redress for violence (CRC/C/GC/13, para. 5).

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.¹⁵ 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)

¹⁵ 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.