

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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Statement by Miss Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I would also like to begin by thanking Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for their important briefings this morning.

Thanks to the Security Council's consideration of the issue over the past decade, there have been many recommendations and strategies for the protection of civilians first and foremost, as well as to overcome obstacles to that end and to ensure that civilians receive the humanitarian assistance and protection they deserve. However, many of those recommendations have not been implemented as a result of many impediments. Those include the lack of political will and, generally speaking, goodwill. In that connection, we would like to focus on the need for various political views not to impede the Council's mission when it comes to its responsibility for powerless civilian populations who fall victim to armed conflicts.

Those efforts led to the Security Council's establishment of a Working Group tasked with the protection of civilians and to draw up plans to put an end to all murder and other forms of violence, including sexual violence, affecting civilians. However, the thrust of the recommendations and presidential statements by the Council have unfortunately not yielded the desired results. We therefore call for respect for all legal obligations and resolutions adopted in this area, as the failure to implement them would lead to the proliferation of a culture of impunity and more violence against civilians.

Over the past two years, the Security Council has addressed many fundamental issues to enhance the effectiveness of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We have also reconsidered efforts undertaken to further promote the protection of civilians. Many proposals and ideas have been put forward to meet the challenges identified in the report of the Secretary-General in 2009 (S/2009/277). However, several fundamental issues must be clarified, including with regard to the responsibilities of the Security Council and the international community and speedy intervention to address the horrors carried out against civilians in armed conflict in areas of political instability. It is also important to adopt a comprehensive approach that allows the Council to tackle the issue of the protection of civilians in innovative ways not yet considered by the Council.

Many important events this year have compelled the Security Council to consider the issue of the protection of civilians and to take swift and decisive action — for instance, to assist the brotherly Libyan people. My country has participated in international efforts to protect Libyan civilians and to provide the necessary assistance in accordance with international legality and resolution 1973 (2011). In that regard, Qatar has committed itself to implement the resolution regarding the protection of civilians in populated areas. We have deployed substantial assistance in the context of the overall emergency humanitarian assistance provided to Libya. We have also chartered several flights to ship hundreds of tons of foodstuffs, as well as 1,450 tons of medical equipment and supplies to that country. More than 400 wounded persons have been transported to Qatari hospitals. We have also shipped approximately 1,000 tons of food supplies and medical supplies by sea. That is in addition to the in-kind assistance and equipment valued at \$18 million. A field hospital with full medical facilities has been provided for Libyans on the Libya-Tunisia border. Qatar has also transported to various safe areas more than 8,000 refugees from Misrata.

With regard to efforts by Qatar-based humanitarian organizations, they have provided assistance in kind as well as medical and nutrition assistance to people on the Tunisian border, amounting to \$2.5 million. We have also worked to provide the necessary assistance to refugees moving across the borders of Tunisia and Egypt.

Qatar was among the first countries to join the international contact group on Libya. We hosted the group's second meeting, at Doha on 13 April, as an international forum with the top priority of protecting civilians.

Foreign occupation is one of the main threats to the protection of civilians. People under occupation suffer from a variety of challenges that exacerbate their situation. Given the inhuman embargo and practices routinely

carried out in the Gaza Strip, we call for every possible measure necessary to protect the civilian population of Palestine from the aggression of Israel, the occupying Power. In conclusion, the protection of civilians is not just a humanitarian concern. We must also work to take comprehensive measures by seeking to implement existing laws for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, without any sort of discrimination or selectivity and in accordance with international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.