



**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent
Representative of Pakistan to the UN at the Open Debate of the
UN Security Council on “Protection of Civilians in
Armed Conflict”**

(22 May 2024)

Mr. President,

We thank you for organizing this important debate on the “protection of civilians in armed conflict”.

2. We also thank the briefers for their insightful inputs.

Mr. President,

3. It is 25 years since the Security Council commenced consideration of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This year is also the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions which made explicit the protections for civilians in conflict zones.

4. It is, therefore, with outrage that we witness the wanton war being waged for the past seven months against helpless Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Thirty-five thousand, mostly innocent women and children, have been killed by the Israeli war machine in this brutal campaign. 2 million Gazans have been displaced repeatedly. Humanitarian supplies have been deliberately blocked; humanitarian workers targeted and killed; hospitals, schools and infrastructure destroyed, and UNWRA – the only UN Agency fully capable of providing relief to the besieged Gazans – has been deliberately defamed and attacked. Famine and pestilence stalk Gaza.

5. This “plausible genocide” – as termed by the ICJ – will forever remain a blot on the world’s conscience. It will haunt the perpetrators of this slaughter. It has sullied the reputation of those who were complicit in the Israeli crimes by offering impunity to the extremist Israeli leadership. The Prosecutor of the ICC has sought arrest warrants, including for two of Israel’s leaders. This will be a test-case for the credibility of the ICC.

Mr. President,

6. It is difficult to build protections for civilians when their suppression, exclusion and expulsion are the very object of a military campaign. As in Palestine, a pervasive campaign of oppression has been underway for decades in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, executed by an army of 900,000 troops, acting with complete impunity, to impose what is ominously called a “Final Solution” for the

Kashmir dispute. Over 100,000 Kashmiris have been killed. Thirteen thousand young Kashmiri boys have been abducted, and many of them mercilessly tortured. All Kashmiri leaders seeking freedom and self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir - as prescribed by several resolutions of the Security Council, - all of them have been incarcerated. Many have died in custody under suspicious circumstances. Extra-judicial killings continue; collective punishments are frequent.

7. Pakistan has submitted a dossier to the United Nations, with evidence of 2800 cases of crimes committed by Indian officials against Kashmiris civilians in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

8. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and more than a dozen Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council, have expressed deep concerns regarding the massive violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and sought investigations. All their requests for access to the occupied territory have been denied.

Mr. President,

9. It is imperative for the Security Council and other UN bodies to redress such violations, to end foreign occupation and promote the right to self-determination for the Kashmiri and Palestinian people. It is essential to address the underlying causes of these conflicts, promote political solutions, and ensure the observance of international humanitarian law, and end the impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

10. The Security Council can contribute to this by:

- holding the perpetrators of war crimes accountable;
- halting weapon supplies to the perpetrators;
- imposing political and legal consequences on the States and individuals responsible for these crimes; and
- Offering protection – including through UN peacekeepers – to the civilians suffering under the yoke of foreign occupation.

11. The adoption of resolution 2719 (2023) was an important milestone in building credible avenues for the protection of civilians including through peace enforcement. We must build on this example of enforcement actions. Apart from political actions to resolve disputes; apart from reinforced legal mechanisms to ensure accountability, we must build the UN's capacity together with relevant regional organizations, such as the AU, to enforce peace and uphold the protection of civilians in conflict zones in accordance with the principles and norms of international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Mr. President, Pakistan looks forward to working for these objectives within the Security Council and at the forthcoming Summit of the Future.

I thank you!