

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Statement

by

H. E. Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser
Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar
to
The United Nations

Before

the Security Council

on

The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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New York, 9 December 2005

الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر لدى الأمم المتحدة

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IN THE NAME OF GOD
MOST COMPASSIONATE MOST MERCIFUL

Mr. President,

Allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December. Through you, we would like to thank the members of the Security Council for convening this open debate to discuss this important item. The protection of civilians in armed conflict leads us to think of the main reason for founding the United Nations that is the promotion of respect for the rule of law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. As such, commitment to protect civilians is not an option but an imperative, the absence of which will obviate the need for a United Nations. This item is one of the most important items on the Agenda of the Security Council given its intrinsic and strong relationship with the maintenance of international peace and security. I would also like to thank the Security-General for his excellent report (S/2005/740), which clearly shed the light on the problem and the road for progress as well as laying down the humanitarian aspect before the council.

Mr. President,

The state of Qatar expresses its concern over the proliferation of wars and conflicts in poor and developing countries; the majority of fallen victims in these wars are women, children and the elderly. Furthermore, these wars and conflicts directly threaten international peace and security, adversely affect the sustainable development of small developing countries, and consume energies and resources in conflict resolution and peacemaking efforts. To this, we add the life-long scars and trauma that surviving victims very often suffer, which by themselves become an impediment to progress and development. We note the dramatic increase in the recruitment of children and youth as soldiers, and in the use of civilians as human shields. Increasingly, modern wars are no longer confrontations between regular armies, but more like street and urban warfare fought by rebels and uniformed soldiers belonging to the same country, or local conflicts raging among civilian factions. These non-conventional battles are extremely lethal. The result however is that there is no marked distinction between combatants and non-combatant

civilians, and a total lack of respect for law. My delegation notes with concern that civilians are the most adversely affected parties in armed conflicts, and that by comparison, in many instances fatalities and injuries

are disproportionately high among civilians despite the fact that they do not participate in combat activities. Moreover, civilians are often attacked and tortured, and are subject to other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Targeting United Nations and other personnel working in the humanitarian field is yet another clear evidence of the increasingly vulnerable environment in which they live, where they are often attacked and killed because of the absence of any security guarantees. The international community and the United Nations should continue to express their denunciation and strong condemnation of these violations and attacks, which are cowardly and inadmissible acts.

Mr. President,

We should therefore spare no effort to mainstream the questions of protecting civilians into state policies, UN programs and mandates of peacekeeping operations. These questions must include reporting human rights violations and taking necessary action, as well as putting in place special and strict measures to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of violence, prevent infection with HIV/AIDS and destruction of homes and property, and end the displacement of entire communities. The United Nations and member states should guarantee the success of efforts aimed at capacity building. Member states must be encouraged to sign and ratify the legal instruments that are readily available within the wider framework of protecting civilians in armed conflict. Pressure must be also brought to bear on the belligerents to bring them into compliance with the rules and principles of international law. In this regard, the United Nations has an important role to play in the field of advocacy. It is impossible to develop a culture of protecting civilians in armed conflicts unless all the stakeholders adequately coordinate their actions. The time has come to act seriously and decisively, and pursue an integrated and systematic approach to prevent the outbreak of conflicts, promote a culture of respect for human rights, and put an end to impunity. Failure to take action means that the universal culture of protecting civilians pursued by the international community will remain hardly attainable.

Mr. President,

We must stress that the protection of civilians whether in times of transition, armed conflicts or when fighting terrorism should be anchored in the respect for inter-national humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. Respect for the relevant instruments requires informing the protagonists, spreading awareness among their ranks to enable them to shoulder their responsibility. We must end impunity at the national and international levels.

Since protagonists include states, in particular their armed and police forces, and armed groups from non-state actors we must stress here that fundamental humanitarian principles of independence, integrity and neutrality apply to this question under all circumstances. Respect for these principles is the sine-qua-non to the creation of adequate conditions for humanitarian intervention whether within or without the United Nations. Moreover, we must fight impunity at the national and international levels.

Mr. President,

Last but not least, the state of Qatar is determined, and to that end shall spare no effort to promote these principles and values during its tenure as an elected member of the Security Council for the period 2006-2007. We call on the Council to resort to monitoring mechanisms and fact-finding missions and to end illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons given their impact on civilian populations. We also believe that the Council should dedicate more attention to the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls, in particular to the use of sexual violence as a weapon and a tool of war, to end forced population displacement through enacting measures and pursuing additional approaches to protect civilians in armed conflict. We want the dignity of women to become the center of the international community's attention. We also need to act so that the terrorist groups committing these atrocities would not escape punishment as stated in the Security Council's Presidential Statement of April 14, 2004. We also reaffirm that the 1948 Geneva Convention remains entirely in effect, and should therefore be complied with under all circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. President