



Security Council briefing and closed consultations on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 21 August 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt
Chargé d'Affaires of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President and thank you Special Coordinator Wennesland for briefing us on the current situation.

Malta remains deeply concerned at the increasing frequency of violence, provocations, and unilateral decisions, which continue to cause civilian suffering in both the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel.

OCHA statistics underline that the scale of violence affecting civilians has resulted in a monthly average of fatalities in the West Bank and Israel that is 85% higher than the monthly average of all of 2022. In this context, we again reiterate that the protection of civilians in conflict and respect of international humanitarian law are fundamental.

We also strongly reiterate our call for relevant parties to safeguard lives, and in particular the wellbeing of children, who continue to bear too many negative repercussions of this prolonged conflict.

Malta unreservedly condemns all acts of terrorism and extremist violence, which have regrettably continued to take place in recent days and weeks. This also includes extremist settler-related violence which has seen alarming intensifications this year.



Furthermore, we remain concerned at the high incidence of Palestinian deaths following military operations in the West Bank and urge the concerned parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

President

Persistent unilateral actions continue to fuel instability and instigate recognized flash points, to the detriment of any real prospects for peace.

Malta recalls that settlements are illegal under international law, and dangerously imperil the viability of the two-State solution based along the pre-1967 borders.

Additionally, demolitions, forced evictions and settler violence have a marked humanitarian toll on Palestinian communities, particularly on herder communities.

Within this context, we call for the cessation of settlement expansion and legalisation.

Continued provocations and threats to the historic status quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem must also cease, as they threaten to ignite tensions with regional repercussions. We emphasise in this regard the importance of the special custodianship role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

President



We welcome attempts being made by Israel's National Security Cabinet to introduce economic measures aimed at bolstering the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority is also facing internal challenges with increasingly negative trends on rule of law and fundamental freedoms in areas where the Palestinian Authority is in control, and in Gaza. In this regard, we are encouraged to note steps in the context of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including through the formation of a dedicated committee, as discussed in talks between Palestinian factions on 30 July in Egypt. A stronger and more credible Palestinian Authority as a partner is in everyone's interest. We continue to urge authorities in Palestine to hold the overdue national elections as soon as possible, as this will be an important sign of strengthening the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority for the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, we call on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to return to good faith dialogue and commitments made related to security coordination.

In the absence of a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, UNRWA continues to be the strongest pillar of support for the growing needs of the Palestinian people. In this regard, we remain concerned at the agency's precarious financial situation, and we highlight the need for the agency to be furnished with predictable and sustained funding.

President



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Recent negative trends clearly indicate that steps towards restoring a political horizon should be the focus of our efforts. Israelis and Palestinians deserve to coexist in freedom, peace and security.

Malta remains committed to the two-State solution as the only just and comprehensive resolution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of both sides.

I thank you.