



Security Council high-level briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 29 November 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President. I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2712. The full implementation of this resolution remains paramount.

I also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his important briefing on the situation on the ground.

Malta commends the mediation efforts of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, which have led to the first humanitarian truce, the gradual release of hostages from Gaza, and the release of detained Palestinian women and children from Israeli prisons. The extension of this truce for an additional two days was also a welcome development. We urge the parties to continue to build on these steps. As a first measure, the truce must continue to be extended. A genuine commitment towards a ceasefire and a lasting political solution is also needed as a matter of urgency.

We also commend the ICRC for its efforts in facilitating the transfer of hostages and detainees. We call for them to be allowed access to the remaining hostages.



Malta reiterates its strong condemnation of the terror attacks by Hamas against Israel and her people on 7 October. We once again call for the release of all remaining hostages safely and unconditionally.

At the same time, the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza is untenable. Thousands of civilians, many of whom are women and children, have been killed. The population continues to suffer from colossal difficulties and hardships regarding healthcare, food security, shelter, and sanitation.

A large number of journalists have also lost their lives.

Meanwhile, countless children continue to live in increased anguish and deprivation. They are disproportionately affected by this conflict and the lack of necessities. The long-term impact that the violence will have on their mental health cannot be ignored. The WHO's statement that more people will die due to rising rates of disease is gravely concerning and immediate action is needed to prevent this scenario.

The truce we have seen in these past days has made clear that a cessation of hostilities is the only way to ensure civilians are protected and continue to receive humanitarian support. The scaling-up and distribution of humanitarian aid can only take place under such conditions.

We urgently call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and aid workers, in compliance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.



In this light, we also recognise UNRWA's work which has continued to take place under extremely dangerous circumstances. We convey our sincere condolences for the over 100 UNRWA staff who have been killed in this conflict.

We cannot afford to lose more lives. We cannot return to further bloodshed and insecurity. It is in this spirit that Malta echoes the Secretary-General's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

President

While all eyes are on Gaza, the West Bank is also suffering unprecedented escalations. Since 7 October, there has been a sharp increase in the killing, violence, and forced displacement suffered by Palestinians through settler violence and hundreds of arrests. Malta underlines Israel's obligations to abide by international law and ensure the protection of the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence. We reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

We call on parties to urge de-escalation and exercise the utmost restraint. Avoiding a regional conflagration is of utmost importance and must be avoided at all costs. We also call on the parties to show restraint and de-escalation along the Blue-Line, the implementation of resolution 1701 remains key.



It is also imperative that we consider a credible foundation for future peace. Malta thus reaffirms its commitment to a two-State Solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future Capital of two states living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Within this dire context, and particularly today on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it remains clear that this is the only viable path to achieving peace.

I thank you.