



## Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question [2334], 19 December 2023

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

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Thank you, President.

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his report on the implementation of resolution 2334. I also thank Major General Patrick Gauchat for his briefing.

Since this Council's last meeting on this resolution in September, the situation has deteriorated on all fronts. We have witnessed an unprecedented scale of death and destruction in the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel, the consequences of which will no doubt reverberate for years to come.

This year, the intensification of deadly violence against civilians in the region, including through acts of terror, has skyrocketed. This unyielding cycle of violence has pushed us further away from a political horizon than in any point in recent history.

It is painfully clear that the situation in Gaza is taking an unimaginable toll on the population. A shocking number of civilians have been killed and displaced. Countless others continue to face the denial of basic necessities.



Malta stresses that respect for international humanitarian law is paramount. All parties are obliged to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are protected.

A significant scale-up of humanitarian aid to Gaza is desperately needed, including through the opening of further crossing points. This must happen in tandem with assurances for the safety of UN and humanitarian workers, including of their premises. The rising death toll of humanitarian and UNRWA staff is completely unacceptable and attacks on religious sites, and persons seeking refuge within, are also unacceptable, as is the number of journalists that have been killed in this conflict

Malta stresses that an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is now an imperative to ensure the necessary protection of civilians and de-escalate this conflict.

We continue to strongly condemn the unjustifiable Hamas terror attack of 7 October. Indiscriminate rocket fire and acts of sexual violence are equally condemnable. We reiterate our call on Hamas to release the remaining hostages immediately and unconditionally, in accordance with resolution 2712. We also underline the urgency for humanitarian actors to be allowed access to the remaining hostages as long as they are held captive.

Too many women and children, on both sides, continue to unjustly suffer the consequences of this conflict. Children have been abducted and are being



killed and maimed at staggering rates. Children face heightened risks of malnutrition, severe illnesses, dehydration and psychological trauma. They deserve our undisputed protection. We commend UNICEF staff and their partners for providing lifesaving aid and psychosocial support to all children, in particular inside Gaza in extremely difficult circumstances.

We also underline that attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian residents and properties in the West Bank are inexcusable. Such acts must not be allowed to take place with impunity.

Settlements, demolition of homes, and displacement of Palestinians violate international law and resolution 2334. They constitute an obstacle to peace, enflame tensions, and threaten the viability of an independent, contiguous Palestinian state. We reiterate our strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions advancing settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

President

Urgent steps need to be taken to prevent regional escalations and to relaunch credible negotiations and engagement between both parties.

A meaningful political horizon cannot be achieved unless we ensure that the Palestinian Authority has the fiscal stability and support it needs.

Malta reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict, based on 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.

It has never been more critical that the international community engages in meaningful peace-forward efforts, placing regional stakeholders at the forefront of any deliberations and addressing the core issues of this conflict. We cannot return to an unsustainable status quo. The violence and suffering must stop.

I thank you.