



## General Assembly Veto Initiative Debate pertaining to a veto cast at the UNSC meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question of 22 December 2023, 9 January 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier  
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President, Excellencies

Malta regrets the context which has necessitated the holding of this debate. The gravity of the situation in the Middle East is undeniably severe. It is unfortunate that the Security Council was unable to respond to that severity with clear and necessary terms. Unity among Council members on such issues is necessary in order to protect the principles of the UN Charter which remain a backbone of effective multilateralism.

At the adoption session of Security Council resolution 2720 on 22 December, Malta had supported the amendment that was subsequently vetoed. The language would have called for the urgent suspension of hostilities in a more determined and decisive manner.



We reiterate our belief that an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is the only way to put an end to the unprecedented human suffering unfolding in Gaza and in Israel.

OCHA's reports that Gaza has become effectively 'uninhabitable' are extremely troubling when one also considers that Gaza is still home to over two million Palestinians, half of whom are children. The civilian population remains besieged by heavy Israeli military attacks, compounded by extremely limited access to life-saving necessities. The risks of famine and a public health crisis are growing every day.

International humanitarian law and the laws of war are clear. They apply to all parties. Military actions during hostilities must always be in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality, and necessity. Parties are also obliged to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are protected. Unhindered humanitarian aid and the safety of UN and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed.



In this regard, Malta calls for the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2712 and 2720. Adherence to these resolutions is crucial if we are to reduce these staggering levels of human suffering.

At the same time, Malta unequivocally condemns the Hamas terror acts of 7 October, and the recurring rocket fire at Israeli civilians. We denounce Hamas' tactic of embedding itself amongst civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, as well as reports of sexual violence. Malta calls for the immediate release of hostages per Security Council resolution 2712 and deplures any violence they endure in captivity.

Turning to the broader region, the conflict has awakened increased regional turbulence and risks of conflagration. Flashpoints of spillover in the West Bank, the Israeli-Lebanese border and in the Red Sea are deeply concerning and must be mitigated as a matter of urgency. We call for all parties concerned to exercise restraint, de-escalate and respect the norms of international law.



As the Gaza hostilities persist, focus on immediate challenges is crucial, yet planning for the future is also imperative. A post-hostility scenario demands reinforcing the Palestinian Authority for effective governance, aligned with a two-State solution, with Gaza as part of an independent Palestinian state.

A serious strategic dialogue aimed at realising these objectives is imperative.

Malta reiterates its commitment to the realisation of 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.

I thank you.