



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 12 January 2024

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

Thank you, President. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Kehris and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their most pertinent briefings.

At the outset we must stress that the catastrophic situation in Gaza is causing immense levels of death, suffering and displacement amongst the civilian population. Millions of civilians are enduring the deprivation of basic necessities, leading to a staggering loss of life.

This plight is no more tragic than when one considers the humanitarian consequences this has on women and children, who suffer disproportionately from food insecurity, malnutrition, and the crippled healthcare system.



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We reiterate that there is an urgent need to genuinely facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into and within Gaza, including through the opening of additional crossing points. Furthermore, all arbitrary bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian operations must cease.

Equally fundamental is the need to assure and safeguard the safety of UN and humanitarian workers, including the security of their premises. The rising death toll among humanitarian, Palestinian Red Crescent Society and UNRWA staff is unacceptable.

Within this context, Malta calls for the immediate and full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2712 and 2720. We look forward to working with the newly appointed Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms Sigrid Kaag towards ensuring this.



President

We must also not forget the plight of those hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza. In accordance with resolution 2712, Malta calls for the immediate and safe release of the remaining hostages. We unreservedly condemn the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October, including the recurring rocket fire into Israeli territory, and further denounce any acts of sexual violence committed.

Malta emphasizes the utmost importance of adhering to international humanitarian law and accountability for those who violate it. It is imperative that all parties take the necessary measures to safeguard civilians and protect civilian infrastructure.

Likewise, attacks on religious sites and individuals seeking refuge within them are unacceptable, as are any deliberate targeting of journalists in the conflict.



President

We remain convinced of the need for an urgent cessation of hostilities.

The establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire is the only way through which a meaningful and effective humanitarian response throughout the entirety of Gaza can be mounted.

This cessation of hostilities is also critical within the context of the displacement of the Palestinian people. Palestinians in Gaza must be allowed to return to their homes or provided with adequate and safe shelter until their homes are rebuilt.

The forced displacement of populations and the transfer of populations from occupied territory, is a grave violation of international law and a war crime under the fourth Geneva Convention. We reject any attempts regarding the forced or coercive transfer of Palestinian people out of Gaza. Statements to this effect from figures within the Israeli Government are deeply regrettable.



We are also deeply concerned that in the past weeks we have witnessed a resurgence of forced transfer of Palestinian communities linked to demolitions, illegal settler encroachment and violence in the West Bank.

Malta strongly stresses that settlements violate international law, obstruct peace, and threaten the viability of an independent, contiguous Palestinian state. Israeli settler violence is unacceptable and must be addressed without impunity.

Such actions also enflame tensions and risk a further spillover of the conflict. All parties must mitigate any threats which enflame regional tensions, including escalations on the Blue Line and in the Red Sea. The universal norms of international law must be respected on all fronts.

A fundamental recommitment to political dialogue which is based on the realisation of a two-State solution has never been more essential.



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Malta reiterates its conviction that the only viable path to achieving peace lies within the internationally agreed parameters of the 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.

I thank you.