



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 22 February 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 Special Coordinator Wennesland and Mr. Locyear for their frank briefings. Mr. Lockyear, sincere condolences for the loss of lives of your colleagues. Too many humanitarian workers and UN workers have perished in this conflict. I thank you also for your courageous decision to brief us at this critical time. At the outset, I underline the fact that any reprisals are unacceptable. As a Council we must make this clear to all sides.

Malta has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October. We reiterate that the immediate and unconditional release of hostages must be a top priority.

However, the scale of human suffering that continues to unfold in Gaza due to ongoing hostilities is appalling and deeply consternating.



We regret that two days ago this Council once again failed to call for a permanent ceasefire.

The Israeli Government's announcement that it will be advancing its ground offensive into Rafah is extremely alarming. This area, designated as a 'safe zone', is sheltering half the population of the Strip, including over 600,000 children and their families.

We are gravely concerned at Israel's plan to displace this acutely vulnerable population. This will only serve to perpetuate the forced displacement of Palestinians and further enflame regional tensions.

President

We have already heard this morning of the medical and humanitarian consequences of this relentless assault on Gaza. Thirty thousand people have already been killed as a result. Twelve thousand are children. Not a single medical facility remains fully functioning.



Reports from the WFP and FAO attesting that acute malnourishment is causing signs of physical wasting in children under the age of five, speaks volumes. Over half a million Gazans are in famine like conditions due to the induced state of food insecurity.

This humanitarian crisis in Gaza needs to be urgently addressed.

Israel is required to facilitate the full and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza, which continues to fall short, and to facilitate an effective humanitarian deconfliction mechanism.

Further crossing points need to be re-opened to allow adequate scaling up of aid, particularly in the north of Gaza where conditions are reportedly even more dire.

President

Malta calls for the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2712 and 2720. This remains the bare minimum required. In this vein, we fully support the Special Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator in her mandate.



We also call for the immediate implementation of the Order on provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January.

UNRWA's presence also remains essential. Funding cuts to the Agency will cause immediate repercussions. It is in this vein that Malta has just issued a further contribution to UNRWA, and we encourage others to do the same.

President

In the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, attacks by the IDF and violent settlers on unarmed Palestinians threaten to push the occupied territories over the brink. We unequivocally stress that settlements are a violation of International Law, and their continued expansion must stop.

Malta also remains deeply concerned about the escalation of hostilities across, and beyond, the Blue Line. We urge all concerned to stop this cycle of violence.



De-escalation and restraint are critical. We reiterate that an immediate ceasefire in Gaza must be agreed to allow the necessary space for a diplomatic resolution to this conflict.

This needs to include a revitalized Palestinian Authority which has the agency and legitimacy to govern the people of an independent Palestine, including in Gaza, in line with the two-State Solution.

I thank you.