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## Security Council briefing on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence under the agenda item 'the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question', 11 March 2024

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, and I also thank SRSG Patten for her important briefing today. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support to SRSG Patten and her office and the important work they carry out.

Malta remains deeply concerned with the continued state of hostilities in Gaza and beyond.



We reiterate our condemnation of the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October. The consequences of those barbaric actions, including rape and sexual torture, are still being felt by the families who lost their loved ones, and by those who are still being held hostage by Hamas. They are in our thoughts, and we once again extend our deepest condolences to all those who have been directly affected, and to the people of Israel. The lasting trauma and anguish that the attacks carried out on that dark day are still having on Israeli society cannot be dismissed or understated.

On the other side, the scale of human suffering and humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Gaza is deeply troubling and concerning. Equally worrying is the prospect of an expansion of the conflict into Rafah, the deteriorating situation in the West Bank, and other violence throughout the wider region.

The prospect of further hostilities and conflict will only result in further suffering. In this vein, an immediate and permanent ceasefire remains the only avenue through which we can prevent a further deterioration and begin addressing the impact of Israel-Hamas war.



This includes the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women and girls. Over 30,000 Palestinians, including an estimated 9,000 women, have been killed in Gaza to date. In this context, we recall that the Arms Trade Treaty requires states to, inter alia, halt transfers when there is a substantial risk they will be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence, or serious acts of violence against women and children.

Furthermore, the bombardment of hospitals, restriction on fuel, electricity, food, water and aid place pregnant women and newborns at significant risk of physical and mental harm, restrict access to necessary and protected medical care, undermine the health of postpartum women.

President

For Malta, giving priority to women, peace and security means upholding information integrity and ethical, trauma-informed representations of conflict related sexual violence.



Malta is appalled by the reports of Israeli women subjected to sexual violence across three reported locations on 7 October, and that some hostages taken to Gaza have been subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence, which may be ongoing.

In this regard, we also look forward to assessing the reports of the Independent, International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT. We urge Israel to fully cooperate with the Commission and OHCHR, and to give them access.

We reiterate that the immediate and unconditional release of hostages, as outlined in both Resolution 2712 and 2720, must be a top priority.

We are equally appalled by UN experts' reports of sexual violence against Palestinian men and women in detention, during house raids, and at check points. We emphasise that accountability for all criminal actions must be ensured.



In this context, we highlight that advancing the women, peace and security agenda means ensuring that the CRSV agenda is not instrumentalised. This includes respecting and safeguarding the dignity and identity of survivors.

To this end, we recommend that the parties to this conflict implement the recommendations just outlined by SRSG Patten.

In conclusion, President, the rights and opportunities of Israeli and Palestinian women, peace activists, journalists, and human rights defenders to contribute to de-escalation, ceasefire, and other efforts to negotiate peace, must be upheld.

Malta will also remain firmly committed to achieving a lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East, which is based on the two-State Solution along the pre-1967 borders, and which addresses the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians towards mutual peace and security.

I thank you.