



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 26 March 2024

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

Thank you, President, and I also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his report.

Regrettably, each update on the implementation of this resolution depicts an even more grim picture of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The conflict in Gaza has had a catastrophic impact on civilians. Yesterday's important adoption of a ceasefire resolution was a vital step towards alleviating this terrible plight.

However, as we have heard from the Special Coordinator's briefing today, the West Bank is not impervious to the dire repercussions of this war.

Rising pressures from continued illegal settlement activity, demolitions, settler violence, intensified Israeli security forces' operations, and the Palestinian Authority's fiscal and economic insecurity, push the region into further instability.



Malta's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law. They are an obstacle to peace and threaten the viability of a two-state solution. We therefore condemn Israel's recent announcement that over 800 hectares of land in the occupied West Bank have been declared as 'state lands'.

Malta stresses its repeated calls on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. We firmly reject Israel's policy and actions advancing illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Such acts must not be allowed to take place with impunity.

We welcome ongoing efforts towards the realisation of a reinforced and revitalised Palestinian Authority, which is allowed effective governance in line with the two-State Solution, and with Gaza as part of an independent Palestinian State. The international community must offer its support to such actions.

President

Malta has repeatedly and strongly condemned the horrendous Hamas terror attack of 7 October, including acts of sexual violence committed and rockets fired at Israeli population centres.



We reiterate our call on Hamas to unconditionally release all remaining hostages.

However, the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza also demands our urgent attention.

There could not be a stronger indictment of our failure to put an end to this tragedy, than the harrowing images of Gazan children suffering starvation. There is an urgent need for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. The Council's adoption of Resolution 2728 is a step in this direction.

Only a ceasefire will permit the conditions necessary to properly alleviate these catastrophic conditions. In the words of the Secretary-General: *'It's time to truly flood Gaza with lifesaving aid. The choice is clear: either surge or starvation.'*

In this regard, we also avail ourselves of this opportunity to reiterate our full support to the Secretary-General. We greatly appreciate his strong leadership and principled approach during this crisis.



Malta stresses that all parties are obliged to comply with international humanitarian law. Israel must allow for the unimpeded, safe delivery of humanitarian aid, including through the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale. Actions it has failed to undertake so far.

We also call for the immediate and full implementation of the Order on provisional measures issued by the ICJ on 26 January.

We further stress our firm rejection of any ground offensive into Rafah. Any such action will inevitably lead to increased human suffering and casualties.

UNRWA's role as a stabilising entity for the future of Gaza also cannot be underestimated. The international community must continue to ensure it is appropriately funded. UNRWA's collapse would have devastating consequences in the entire region.

In conclusion, President, Malta stresses that now more than ever, there is a pressing need to relaunch peace negotiations for a just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict. We stand ready to support any initiatives towards this end, including in this Council.



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Malta reaffirms its commitment to a political solution 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.

I thank you.