



Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 17 July 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 Chef de Cabinet Mr Rattray for delivering the Secretary-General's briefing.

The Middle East is going through an unprecedented period. As the war in Gaza rages on, it is having a ripple effect across the entire region, endangering civilians and upending any prospects for peace.

This is why, following the horrific 7 October attacks by Hamas and other armed groups, Malta has unfailingly called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

We continue to unequivocally condemn these heinous terrorist attacks and to call for the urgent and unconditional release of all remaining hostages in Gaza.

It is imperative that Hamas and Israel accept and implement the ceasefire proposal outlined in Security Council resolution 2735.



The implementation of all relevant Council resolutions and the full, immediate, and effective implementation of the Orders of the ICJ remains essential.

Despite these clear obligations, we continue to witness further suffering in Gaza and beyond.

Just last week, Israel ordered the forced displacement of all Palestinians from Gaza City. The recurring displacement of the population exacerbates the perils already faced by Palestinians. It also forces them into smaller areas, where their safety, even in supposed designated humanitarian zones, cannot be guaranteed.

Malta is gravely alarmed at the effect this war is having on women. Harrowing accounts from the ground clearly show that we must do a lot more to ensure their dignity, privacy, and safety.



Children are also suffering in a disproportionate manner. Israel's bombing of schools and hospitals, in which those most vulnerable seek refuge and treatment, is unconscionable. Strikes on facilities sheltering IDPs have led to the killing of children. This is unacceptable. Children must never be considered as justifiable collateral damage.

Young children and pregnant women are at additional acute risk of disease and malnourishment due to a decimated healthcare system, persistent food insecurity and no access to clean water.

These conditions put children, newborns, and pregnant women in significant peril and are not in line with their unique protections under international law.

All parties have an obligation under international law, including international humanitarian law, to protect civilians. Accountability for violations of these obligations must be ensured.



Furthermore, we reiterate that humanitarian access into and across the Gaza Strip must be drastically improved. Land crossings must be re-opened and fully utilised. An effective and respected deconfliction system remains a priority.

Let us never forget that humanitarians risk their lives on a daily basis and must be protected at all times. It is the duty of this Council to ensure that they are provided with the tools and protection they need to at least mitigate the extreme risks they face.

We commend the efforts of UNRWA and other humanitarian actors which continue to provide support, at all costs.

UNRWA has a vital role to play in the humanitarian response in Gaza and the West Bank, and for regional stability. In the face of threats to its facilities and mandate, financial and political support to the Agency are vital.

President



Preventing a spillover of escalation in the Middle East is paramount. This is crucial in the face of increasingly alarming skirmishes between Israel and Hezbollah across the Blue Line. De-escalation, restraint and diplomacy are key.

Israel's illegal unilateral actions in the West Bank, including the recent announcements to further settlements, and the continued dispossession and violence imposed on Palestinians, also need to cease. These actions exacerbate tensions and threaten the viability of a two-State Solution. Military raids in West Bank refugee camps, along with a surge in extremist settler violence, further impede peace progress.

Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority must enjoy the full support of the international community in its path towards revitalisation for the effective governance over a unified West Bank and Gaza as an independent Palestinian State. It also has a crucial role to play in recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza.



Challenges towards ensuring peace for Israelis and Palestinians persist, but we must not let this extinguish all hope. A ceasefire in Gaza is the first step towards paving the way for a credible political horizon.

Malta affirms that this must be then followed by irreversible actions towards the comprehensive 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.