



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 13 August 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt,
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Director Lisa Doughten from OCHA for their harrowing briefings.

Malta condemns the horrific strike on the Al-Tabaeen school in Gaza last weekend, which reportedly killed dozens of civilians, including children. This is a continuation of the deeply concerning pattern of strikes on Palestinian educational facilities.

Al-Tabaeen school was a refuge for hundreds of displaced Palestinians. We urge Israel to cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects and to take immediate, decisive action to adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law.



It is unacceptable that the civilian casualties of this war have reached 40,000, and by some estimates may be as high as 180,000, and that several hostages, including children, remain captive in Gaza for 312 days.

Innocent lives, on both sides, should be safeguarded at all costs. The status quo reflects an apparent complete disregard for international law as the *modus operandi* of the conflict parties.

Hamas's use of civilian infrastructure for militant purposes, including through the firing of rockets into Israel, directly jeopardises civilians, and we wholly condemn it, as we have consistently condemned terror attacks including those of 7 October.

Nonetheless, strict compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, remains a paramount obligation of the conflict parties, including Israel.



The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution are not voluntary. The lives of civilians, women and children cannot be disregarded. Malta condemns the loss of all innocent civilian life, including the recent killing of Druze children in *Majdal Shams*, and we stress the conflict parties' obligation to prioritise protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

President

The broader and systematic risks faced by Gaza's population remain severe. Humanitarian aid continues to be blocked without any legitimate administrative or bureaucratic reason.

Hunger, the growing threat of diseases such as polio, exacerbated by little to no access to medical aid, persistent displacement, and lawlessness, have deepened insecurity rendering the situation untenable.



Humanitarian actors continue to inform us that what is being done to address these horrific conditions is nowhere close to enough. A paradigm shift is necessary. Border crossings must be re-opened and effective measures need to be taken to ensure that aid is delivered into and across Gaza.

President

The carnage must stop, hostages must be released, they must be united with their families, and the humanitarian crisis must be adequately addressed. The full, immediate, and effective implementation of relevant Council resolutions and the Orders of the ICJ is essential.

Malta reaffirms its unequivocal call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.



We fully support and commend efforts by the US, Egypt and Qatar who continue work towards bridging gaps to implement the framework agreement, which is in line with Council resolution 2735. We call on the conflict parties to constructively approach negotiations and urgently implement the ceasefire deal.

As regional escalations continue, we underline that concluding this deal is critical. This will directly contribute to avoiding a broader conflict in the Middle East.

We call on all regional parties to commit to diplomacy, de-escalate and refrain from any attacks which would enflame regional tensions and undermine chances for a ceasefire deal.

For Israelis and Palestinians to know security and peace, a return to restorative dialogue towards a political horizon must become the core objective. Malta stresses that this must align with a comprehensive peace plan which paves the way towards a credible and irreversible realisation of the two-State Solution.

I thank you.