



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 4 September 2024

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

Thank you, President. Since this is the first meeting of the Council this month, let me congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the Council. I thank Sierra Leone for steering its work during the month of August in an efficient and professional manner. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Director Wosornu, Dr Bron Harlev, and Ms Novak for their informative briefings.

It is gravely alarming that with each briefing this Council receives, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel steadily worsens.

We are deeply saddened, appalled, and condemn the killing of six Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas, and extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends. Our thoughts are with you, and with the families of those who's loved ones are still held hostage, including children.



We also remain concerned about the reports of sexual violence targeting the hostages, and the dire conditions in which they are held in, which we wholly condemn.

Equally worrying, are Hamas' recent announcements that hostages are to be killed should Israeli Defence Forces close in on them. The protection and upholding of human rights is paramount, and the rights of the hostages are to be safeguarded at all costs.

As we have said many times in this Chamber, Malta reiterates its unreserved condemnation of the 7 October terror attacks, and the ensuing killings and hostage taking committed by Hamas and other armed groups and remind that hostage taking is a violation of International Law.

We demand, yet again, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Humanitarian access to the hostages must also be facilitated.



These are demands which this Council has consistently repeated since 7 October, and has enshrined in resolutions 2712, 2720, 2728, and 2735.

At the same time, we must also highlight the dire situation of arbitrarily detained Palestinians, suffering decrepit conditions in Israeli detention. Individuals forcibly detained and imprisoned without charge must be released and independent investigations into allegations of torture need to take place.

An immediate and permanent ceasefire remains the only clear path through which the bloodshed and suffering on both sides can finally be put to an end.

The urgency of a ceasefire is undeniable in the face of a situation in Gaza which is catastrophic, with civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict. We call on the parties to prioritise dialogue and agree to the terms of a ceasefire, in line with Resolution 2735.



Malta welcomes news that polio inoculations for children in Gaza are well underway, with over 187,000 vaccinated. We commend the parties involved in the logistics of this campaign, including WHO, UNRWA, and other partners. Amid conditions fraught with perils on every front, Gazan children deserve to be protected from this additional health risk.

However, we stress that other relentless threats to their lives must also be addressed. Reports of children being killed or admitted to besieged hospitals with shrapnel injuries due to shelling in densely populated residential areas persist.

Children are neither a target nor collateral damage. Their special protections under international law are clear and need to be urgently adhered to by all parties.

With conditions of food insecurity, severe water and sanitation deficiencies, and a devastated health system, brought about as a direct result of Israel's military campaign, additional threats are always imminent.



Efforts to address the colossal humanitarian needs of Gaza's civilian population must be adequately accelerated and conducted without conditions or impediments.

President

The situation in the occupied West Bank is also of grave concern. The past week has seen alarming violence across the West Bank, including in Jenin, due to intensified military operations, air strikes, armed clashes, and settler violence. This latest surge in violence has already resulted in many deaths and injuries and is threatening to push the West Bank over the edge.

An escalation on that front must be prevented at all costs. We call for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure to be prioritised. The West Bank cannot turn into another Gaza.

Amid the continued risk of a regional escalation, we also continue to emphasise the urgent need for a rapid reduction in tensions and actions which can exacerbate the flammable situation.



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Parties need to urgently resort to dialogue and diplomacy, and secure a ceasefire. This is the only way to address immediate term priorities in Gaza and the West Bank, release the hostages, and ensure a credible and irreversible political horizon for a comprehensive realisation of the two-State Solution.

I thank you.