



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 16 October 2024

Malta Statement delivered by HE Vanessa Frazier

Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President, and I also thank Ms. Msuya, for her harrowing briefing.

On Monday we witnessed shocking and disquieting images of civilians being burned alive following the Israeli air strike on Al-Aqsa Hospital, where several IDPs were taking refuge.

Regrettably, this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the catastrophe which is unfolding.

Central Gaza alone has seen at least two mass casualty incidents since Sunday. In Northern Gaza, the siege, has intensified, cutting off food and aid to the area, and forcing over 50,000 people from Jabalia camp to be displaced once more.

Such levels of suffering must not be normalised or justified.



The devastating consequences of this violence have exacted a heavy toll on civilians. The cost in human lives is staggering. In the last week alone, 379 Palestinians have been killed, and over 1,400 injured in Gaza.

These are not just statistics. They represent human beings, families, communities, and futures that have been torn apart.

Malta urgently calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Hostages must be released unconditionally. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to flow without obstruction. All crossing points for aid must be opened without any more delays.

We strongly condemn all actions that target civilians and civilian infrastructure. It is essential that all parties, without exception, adhere to the principles of international law. They must make sure that military action and hostilities do not further entrench the suffering of civilians.



No food has entered North Gaza for more than 12 days, with the World Food Programme once more warning of famine engulfing the population. The population is being deprived of basic necessities, including healthcare. Hospitals in North Gaza are operating at minimum capacity.

Those being once again forcibly displaced from the North have nowhere to go, as bombardment continues across the Strip. Hospitals, schools, and places of worship are often targeted, depriving civilians of any potential sanctuary. With nowhere safe to go, we have heard, that some have chosen to die at home.

International Humanitarian Law is unequivocal. Forced displacement is prohibited. Civilians must be safeguarded at all times, and those who choose to remain in their homes must be guaranteed access to essential resources and services.

Malta reiterates its call for the immediate and full implementation of the International Court of Justice's orders on provisional measures, and emphasises that international law is binding on all states.



Despite this severe insecurity and violence, the second round of polio vaccinations have started to be administered on Monday. We pay tribute to the brave workers from WHO, UNICEF, and UNRWA who aim to vaccinate over 590,000 children in the coming days.

We must also strive to ensure that children in Gaza are protected in the long-term, when not only physical care but also psychological support will be needed. There is no actor which is better placed to ensure this than UNRWA.

Yet, the Agency is facing a multitude of challenges, including strikes on its premises, such as the Al Mufti school, which was shelled on 13 October. 22 Palestinians, including 15 children, were killed in that attack.

It is concerning that legislation affecting the Agency is being considered by the Israeli Knesset, which is seeking to halt UNRWA's operations in the oPt, including East Jerusalem.



UNRWA is a pillar of humanitarian efforts and regional stability. Without its continued presence, the consequences will be devastating for millions who rely on its services. We once again call for the shelving of this legislation to ensure that UNRWA can continue its vital work, in line with its mandate adopted by the General Assembly with an overwhelming majority.

President

The time for rhetoric has long passed. The situation is unsustainable. The stories are heart-wrenching. This violence must end.

The situation in the West Bank also remains alarming, particularly the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority, the increase in illegal settlements, and settler violence. The situation of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the threats to the long established but fragile Status Quo on Jerusalem's Holy Sites also deserve our undivided attention. These challenges and the conflict's expansion into Lebanon may engulf the region.



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This Council has the tools and responsibility to act decisively and effectively. By pursuing a regional ceasefire, upholding international law, and working toward a credible and irreversible realisation of the two-state solution, we can chart a path to peace that is both just and lasting.

The world is watching, and we must not fail it.

I thank you.