



Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, 29 October 2024

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

Your Excellency, President

I begin by thanking you for chairing this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I also thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his sobering briefing.

Malta remains gravely concerned about the war in Gaza, the worsening situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the spreading of the conflict into Lebanon, and the wider regional implications of these prolonged conflicts.

While our commitment to a secure, stable, and peaceful Middle East remains unshaken, the unabating attacks and violence, coupled by this Council's inability to act or implement its resolutions, are deeply worrying. An immediate and unconditional ceasefire must be established.



The images and scenes coming out of Gaza depict a horrific situation. Across the entire Strip, unprecedented threats to civilians are rampant. The humanitarian situation has long become catastrophic.

Weeks of relentless Israeli shelling and hostilities in the North, including on schools, hospitals, places of worship, and displacement camps, have caused mass casualty incidents. Countless civilians, especially women and children, continue to suffer forced and repeated displacement.

The cut-off of humanitarian aid is further compounding this situation. The UN and implementing partners continue to face severe and unlawful obstructions by Israeli authorities in delivering critical aid to North Gaza. Most aid convoys are denied access on a daily basis.

WFP has warned that the threat of famine is growing. Immediate and sustained humanitarian access across the Gaza Strip is desperately needed.



We unequivocally condemn all actions that target civilians and civilian infrastructure. All parties must adhere to international law, including through the implementation of the ICJ's Orders on provisional measures.

We reiterate our condemnation of Hamas for its reprehensible terrorist acts on 7 October 2023 and that Israel has the right to protect itself in accordance with International Law, including International Humanitarian Law.

We similarly demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other armed groups, and condemn the continued indiscriminate rocket fire endangering civilian population centres in Israel.

President

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the situation is deteriorating rapidly.



Israel's unilateral actions, including illegal settlement expansion, dispossession, arbitrary detainment, and continued raids in the West Bank, make life intolerable for Palestinians. Extremist settler violence fosters further instability.

Furthermore, the status quo must be maintained, and threats to the Holy Sites must cease.

We recall the ICJ's Advisory Opinion of 19 July, which stated that Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and must end as soon as possible.

Malta is deeply concerned with the steps taken by the Israeli Knesset yesterday to abrogate UNRWA's ability to function in the oPt. These actions are contrary to international law, further entrench the occupation, have immediate devastating implications for millions of Palestinians, and broad regional consequences. UNRWA is a stabilising force in the region, and an irreplaceable actor for Palestine refugees. We call on Israel to rescind this legislation and to ensure UNRWA's unhindered access to those in need.



Equally crucial is international support for the Palestinian Authority as it pursues revitalization.

President

Malta is also gravely concerned over the escalating military situation in Lebanon. We condemn the alarming toll on civilians and widespread displacement taking place.

We call for an urgent cessation of hostilities across the Blue Line, and demand a ceasefire rooted in Resolution 1701. Hezbollah's rocket attacks must end, and Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be upheld.

Bolstering Lebanon's state institutions, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces, is also critical.

As a troop-contributing country, Malta is deeply concerned by recent assaults on UNIFIL peacekeepers. Such acts are blatant violations of international law, and undermine the Mission's critical role. The Security Council must stand united in its unwavering support for peacekeepers.



Furthermore, we also need to maintain focus on the recent attacks and retaliatory strikes between Israel and Iran which risks further widening the conflict. We urge all parties to de-escalate in order to break the cycle of escalation and avoid an all-out regional war.

President

Our immediate priority at this pivotal moment must be de-escalation and accountability. Diplomacy and concerted efforts towards ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon are essential to prevent further bloodshed.

Beyond the immediate crisis, our long-term objective must be the credible and irreversible realisation of the two-State solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. This is the only path that will ensure lasting peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis, and the entire region.

This Council not only has the tools but also the responsibility to act decisively, and Malta stands ready to act.

Let us not delay any further. The future of the region depends on the actions we take today.



**THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UN NEW YORK**



Malta
2023-2024

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL

I thank you.