



Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES MEDIA SEMINAR TO EXPLORE CREATIVE APPROACHES

IN SPREADING MESSAGE OF PEACE AMID CURRENT MIDDLE EAST TROUBLES

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, as delivered by Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, in Tokyo today, 26 June:

I send my warm greetings to all participants in this Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. Let me also convey my gratitude to the Government of Japan and the United Nations University for hosting this event.

You meet at a very critical time. After years of occupation, violence and mistrust, Israeli and Palestinian societies stand further apart than ever before. Alarming rifts have also surfaced in internal Palestinian politics, as armed clashes between rival factions spread death and destruction across the Gaza Strip.

I have voiced my deep concern about this internecine violence, particularly in Gaza. It has set back the Middle East peace process and the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the violence has spread beyond Gaza in recent weeks, and both Palestinian and Israeli civilian lives have been lost. I have repeatedly called on all sides to uphold international law and protect civilians. The cycle of violence has to end immediately and calm must be restored.

The current outbreak of violence is cause for great dismay. But it should not lead to despair. Instead, we must focus all our energies on finding a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. And we must take heart from the numerous opinion polls of recent years that point to consistently strong grass-roots support in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory for peaceful coexistence within the framework of a two-State solution.

This resilient aspiration lies at the heart of your discussions on the role of civil societies in supporting the peace process. I am heartened that you will do so within the framework of a media seminar. The media is a powerful medium to inform and influence people, and to promote sustained dialogue and understanding. I hope the participating media personalities and civil society participants will explore creative approaches to spreading the message of peace and coexistence in these troubled times.

Your gathering underscores the reality that each and every one of us must remain actively engaged in the search for peace. In myriad ways, we must all contribute towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515, and the principle of land for peace.

In that spirit, I wish you a most successful seminar.

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