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PANELLISTS EXAMINE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO CONTAIN MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, RESUME DIALOGUE

(Received from a UN Information Officer.)

NICOSIA, 17 April -- The events of Sabra and Shatila were being repeated today in the Palestinian occupied territory, [Jerusalem Times](#) publisher Hanna Siniora said this morning at the International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace.

He said that United States Secretary of State Colin Powell had not realized the objectives of his mandate to effect a ceasefire, a withdrawal of Israeli forces and the beginning of negotiations. Despite President Bush's call for a withdrawal, the Israeli army was present in all the cities they had invaded. After Mr. Powell's departure, Palestinians would be left with the siege of Bethlehem and of President Arafat's headquarters. The occupation continued with no further word from President Bush or Colin Powell demanding that Israel withdraw.

The representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation said the major goal today was to implement immediately Security Council resolutions [1402 \(2002\)](#) and [1403 \(2002\)](#) which provided for a meaningful ceasefire and an immediate Israeli withdrawal. As soon as there was a ceasefire and Israeli forces pulled out, the Tenet and [Mitchell scheme](#) should be implemented. Its merit was that it led to reinvigorating the negotiating process by providing an interconnection between security arrangements and renewed political negotiations.

Professor Markus Kaim of the Friedrich Schiller University in Germany said that anything that happened in the Middle East region could have more direct consequences for the Europeans than for the Americans. Regional stability occupied a higher priority on Europe's agenda than the peace process per se. Europe had played a major role in institution building and reducing major imbalances in the Middle East. Without European financial aid it would be difficult for a Palestinian State to exist or be consolidated. While a more activist European Union policy was called for, there were constraints, the most serious being Israel's perception of its pro-Arab tilt. There were, however, steps which the European Union could take, including helping in the placement of military monitors in key positions such as the Golan Heights as part of an early warning unit or as monitors for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and securing needed resources in the region, namely in the area of water and water management.

The United Nations Charter had always provided guidelines to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, said Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Cyprus, Joseph S. Joseph. Israel would be in a better position to expect peace and security if it paid more attention to the messages coming from the international community. The European Union could do more with regard to the situation in the Middle East. It could let Israel know that their actions were not acceptable. The United States' special relation

with Israel could be a useful tool in bringing the two parties together.

The representatives of Namibia, Tunisia and China also made statements.

The meeting will reconvene this afternoon to hold its final session which will explore the theme "The urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State". Panelists will examine the Oslo process; elements of a permanent solution based on international legitimacy; and Palestinian statehood – a key to peace in the Middle East.

Presentation by Experts

HANNA SINIORA, publisher, The Jerusalem Times, said that the events of Sabra and Shatila were being repeated today in the occupied Palestinian territory. Eleven years after Madrid, there were new actors and new massacres. Whole families were being killed by the Israeli onslaught. Although the Israelis denied that there were massacres, it had not allowed reporters to enter the affected areas. Despite the new Arab peace plan, Palestinians continued to suffer.

As a result of the invasion of the cities, there had been three Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and, for the first time, stated that at the end of negotiations there would be a Palestinian State.

The resolutions, however, have not been fulfilled. United States Secretary of State Colin Powell had a mandate to call for a ceasefire, a withdrawal of Israeli forces and the beginning of negotiations. None of those objectives had been realized. Despite President Bush's call for a withdrawal, the Israeli army was present in all the cities they had invaded. After Mr. Powell departed, Palestinians would be left with the siege of Bethlehem and of President Arafat's headquarters. The occupation continued, and there had been no further word from President Bush or Colin Powell demanding that Israel withdraw.

He said that the European Union had sent Javier Solana to examine the situation but he had been rebuffed by Ariel Sharon. When he returned to Europe there was talk of sanctions against Israel but that talk had stopped. Without sanctions, Security Council resolutions would not be implemented. Why was there a double standard when dealing with the State of Israel? The Russian Federation had tried to meet with Chairman Arafat but was also rebuffed. Israel had said that it wanted normal relations with the Arab countries, but when that was offered by the Arab peace plan, the Israelis responded by further invasions. The Palestinians wanted peace. They wanted Israel to withdraw to the borders of 1967, not to the mandated borders of 1947. According to news reports, Sharon had said recently that he would attend an international peace conference with Arafat. Hopefully, that would be a result of Mr. Powell's visit.

OLEG OZEROV, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, said his Government was deeply concerned about the unprecedented sufferings of the civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory. It was troubled by the fact that Israeli forces had twice seized a Russian Orthodox Church-owned property where Russian pilgrims were accommodated. In general, the Russian Federation was concerned about the situation around the religious sanctuaries in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority. Moreover, there were indications that the conflict was spreading to other areas of the region. The international community must do everything possible to stop the conflict from expanding and urge restraint on all sides. Israeli use of force could not lead to peace or to security. Palestinians too must be aware that achieving political aims by means of terror was unacceptable and would not be supported.

He said the major goal today was to immediately implement Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) which provided for a meaningful ceasefire and an immediate Israeli withdrawal. The siege of Chairman Arafat's headquarters must be lifted. He insisted that firing at residential areas, demolition of houses and destruction of historical and religious sites be stopped. As soon as there was a ceasefire and pullout of Israeli forces, the Tenet and Mitchell scheme should be implemented. Its merit was that it led to reinvigorating the negotiating process by providing an interconnection between security arrangements and renewed political negotiations. That interconnection had been a key stumbling block.

Palestinians would require international assistance to reconstruct their infrastructure, security services and capability, he said. On 10 April, the Russian Federation, United States, European Union and the United Nations had

transformed the “Quartet” into an authoritative international mechanism. For the first time, leading international mediators declared that there must be immediate, parallel and accelerated movement towards near-term and tangible political progress.

MARKUS KAIM, Professor of Political Science, Friedrich Schiller University, Germany, said a consensus existed that Europe had not had the political will or inclination to directly struggle with the United States over the majority of issues dealing with the Middle East. Europeans tended to be vocal critics of what the United States did, or rather did not do, in the Middle East. The United States responded by critiquing Europe’s tendency to be “biased” toward the Arabs. The differing analytical approaches were a result of differing priorities and political orientations. Europe was more attuned to and affected by local developments than the United States. Anything that happened in the Middle East region could have more direct consequences for the Europeans than for the Americans. Regional stability occupied a higher priority on Europe’s agenda than the peace process per se. Washington’s deep engagement in the peace process was driven by the need to ensure Israel’s security and its integration into the social fabric of the Arab arena.

He said the United States was a single State actor while Europe was composed of several States with no single foreign policy. While United States policies focused mainly on “high” politics such as military and strategic objectives, Europe concentrated on the “low” politics of economy, culture and society and stressed multilateral approaches. United States policies were dependent on and responsive to domestic politics. European policymakers’ actions were less fettered by domestic factors. Europe had played a major role in institution-building and reducing major imbalances in the Middle East. Without European financial aid it would be difficult for a Palestinian State to exist or be consolidated.

Although the Palestinians had been satisfied with the low-key role of the Europeans, he said, they would have preferred that the European Union be more openly critical of the excessively brutal Israeli reactions. They would also like to have more support for the deployment of United Nations security forces between Israeli troops and the Palestinian population. While a more activist European Union policy was called for, there were constraints, the most serious being Israel’s perception of its pro-Arab tilt. There were, however, steps which the European Union could take, including conditioning further aid to the Palestinians Authority on full financial and political transparency. A Palestinian State with an authoritarian leadership would never be a suitable peace partner for Israel. European negotiators should also make it clear that the European Union would not support a mass refugee return. It could also monitor Palestinian media to ensure that blatant anti-Semitism and calls for the destruction of Israel were eliminated.

The European Union should strongly advise Syria to participate in multilateral talks, he said. Further, the Union could help in the placement of military monitors in key positions such as the Golan Heights, as part of an early warning unit or as monitors for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. The Union could also secure needed resources in the region and enhance regional cooperation, namely in the area of water and water management by building and maintaining water desalinization plants. For Euro-Atlantic cooperation to be successful in the area of Arab-Israeli peace-making, an institutional mechanism needed to be set up to coordinate European Union and United States efforts. The United States must understand that it alone could not bring about a peace settlement. Moreover, there must be genuine unity in the European Union and it must be willing to cooperate with the United States. Finally, the Union must not only maintain its ties with Israel’s Arab neighbours, it must improve its political ties with Israel.

JOSEPH S. JOSEPH, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of Cyprus, said the Middle East problems should be solved peacefully with an exchange of words, not the exchange of violence. Passion and revenge was dominating actions. That vicious cycle could only lead to disappointment. The international community must take steps to end the conflict. It could provide useful guidelines for approaching the situation in a positive manner. It was time to develop a plan of action that was result-oriented. Sending a multinational peacekeeping force was an idea worth promoting. The failures of the past should be a source of strength and not of discouragement.

The United Nations Charter had always provided guidelines to preserve succeeding

generations from the scourge of war. Israel would be in a better position to expect peace and security if it paid more attention to the messages coming from the international community. The United Nations was a microcosm of the real world. It was an institutional arrangement. Each of the countries needed to stand behind the resolutions. In the long run, the future of the European Union would depend on the role it played on the international scene. Today, the European Union let Israel know that their actions were not acceptable. The United States could use its special relation with Israel as a useful tool to bring the two sides together. The European Union and other organizations could be helpful in bringing about a settlement to the situation and in the Middle East. The establishment of a Palestinian State was not only what the Palestinians wanted but it was what the global will called for.

The representative of Namibia said his Government condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It did not condone suicide bombings. However, it supported legitimate acts of resistance against foreign occupation and aggression. The illegal occupation of Palestine, the oppression, the settlement activities and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people by the occupying Power were the root causes of violence and insecurity in the region. Unless they were removed, the situation would continue to deteriorate. He welcomed the Security Council's recent reassertion of its responsibility in the area. Unfortunately, Israel had chosen to ignore Council resolutions. To maintain its credibility, the Council must ensure that its resolutions were implemented immediately and without preconditions. If Israel did not withdraw its troops from Palestinian territory, the Council must consider taking appropriate measures against the Israeli Government. He supported the idea of an international observer force and urged the Council to move speedily to authorize the establishment of such a Mission to protect the Palestinian civilians.

The representative of Tunisia said the Palestinian people continued to live in occupied territories, fearful of Israeli military attacks. He reiterated Tunisia's support and solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Israelis were attempting to undermine the Palestinian people and spread misery among them. It was clear that Israel's refusal to implement resolutions [1397 \(2002\)](#), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) and its continued onslaught on the territories were intended to deny the Palestinian people their inalienable rights and to hinder any initiative that would lead to a settlement on the basis of international legitimacy. He urged all peace-loving States and parties, especially the most influential parties on the international level, to force Israel to respect international law and Security Council resolutions. He requested those parties to use their influence to force Israel to comply with the recent resolution adopted by the Human Rights Commission. Sharon's actions would only give the Israelis the illusion of being invincible. The international community had to convince Israel that military action would get them nowhere and that only negotiations would bring them hope.

The representative of China said his Government strongly appealed to both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the Israelis in particular, to implement relevant United Nations resolutions, to actively coordinate with the international community's peace-making efforts, withdraw all of its troops from Palestinian territories and restart negotiations at an early date. Political solution through negotiations on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the land for peace principle was in accord with the fundamental interests of the people of all countries of the Middle East. China had consistently supported the Palestinian people in their just cause to restore their legitimate national rights. It had made every effort to urge Israel to implement relevant United Nations resolutions, terminate the military campaign against the Palestinian people, and lift the siege of President Arafat immediately and unconditionally.

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