

**HE SECRETARY- GENERAL
REMARKS TO PRESS WITH
PRIME MINISTER RAMI HAMDALLAH OF STATE OF PALESTINE
Ramallah, 22 July 2014**

Assalaam alaikum.

Good evening.

Thank you for your very generous and warm welcome and hospitality by your Cabinet.

It is a tremendous honour to be with you today. I look forward to my first Iftar in the State of Palestine.

It is good to be in Ramallah once again, and I always come with great pleasure.

But this time, I am here with a grieving heart.

The images of women and children killed and suffering in Gaza are almost too much to bear.

I just briefed the Security Council from Ramallah just a half an hour ago, and your Ambassador [Riyad] Mansour has given a moving testimony, reading name after name of the many, so many, victims. I was so much saddened to hear all this.

Too many civilians are dying. Too many are caught in the crossfire. Too many families simply have no way out.

UNRWA [the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] is now hosting more than 100,000 people. That is about 5 per cent of the total population of Gaza.

I am concerned that further displacement will create chaos as well as yet more suffering of the Palestinian people.

Israeli military operations in Gaza must end. So must rocket fire from Gaza – it must also end.

I have been travelling the region, pressing for an immediate ceasefire.

At every stop, I have called for much more to be done to protect the civilians and to ensure their rights under international humanitarian law, to protect particularly many Palestinian civilians. There is a huge question of proportionality.

I am deeply concerned that more than 500 people have been killed and more than 2,000, almost 3,000 people, have been injured. If there is no end to the violence, this number will increase. I am deeply concerned about this.

I have had intensive discussions with President [Mahmoud] Abbas while we were both in Qatar. I had also intensive discussions with Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu, President [Abdel Fattah Al] Sisi of Egypt, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, the Amirs of Qatar and Kuwait, and many others with more to come.

All agree that the violence must stop. It must stop now. That is also what I told the Security Council today when I briefed them from here just minutes ago, as I said.

Mr. Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have now come to the region three times as Secretary-General to help end a burning crisis that happened in just five years. In five years, I [have been] here on an urgent mission three times.

It is time to end the cycle of unrelenting suffering for the Palestinian people.

In plain terms, that means any ceasefire must also tackle the root causes of instability in Gaza.

Things cannot go back to the way they were – suffocating closures, chronic shortages of water and energy, economic underdevelopment, and chronic political impasse. Gazans must have real hope for reconstruction and progress.

In Cairo and in Tel Aviv, I have urged an opening of legal crossings.

Governance issues must also be addressed.

I am encouraged by the formation of a Government of National Consensus that has undertaken to respect the PLO commitments.

I urge the distinguished Ministers to exercise their rightful responsibilities as the legitimate Government and bring tangible improvements to Palestinians, including in Gaza.

I have listened very attentively to the voices of the Ministers who were briefing us from Gaza.

The tasks are very difficult and challenging. The list is long, and I commend Prime Minister Hamdallah for his work in this very challenging environment.

My Special Coordinator Robert Serry and I continue to support this Government's efforts.

We must also address the worrisome situations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, whose residents have also been subjected to harsh measures, violence, and restrictions.

Access restrictions to holy sites are deeply troublesome, particularly during Ramadan.

Settler violence is a deep and growing concern. There must be no impunity.

The murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir was despicable. Here in the State of Palestine, I condemn it once again. Justice must be done.

And, of course, the ongoing building of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian territory makes it harder to build a lasting peace settlement. This is a violation of international law.

Only a negotiated agreement will grant Palestinians their legitimate aspirations to an end to the occupation and a viable, independent State of

Palestine living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Mr. Prime Minister, you can continue to count on the United Nations to support all efforts to make that longstanding dream a reality.

Shukran jazeelan. Thank you.

Q: [inaudible on the possibility of a ceasefire and any potential Security Council action]

SG: I am here to add my voice and my strength for the proposals made by Cairo, the Egyptian Government, so that we can bring an end to this intolerable violence. Just a few hours or a few day delay in this negotiation will mean that many, many more citizens [will die]. So this is an unacceptable situation that is continuing. And this is why I am working very closely with leaders in the region. Yesterday, when I had a meeting with Secretary of State Kerry, I told the media that our joint efforts rooted on three important issues. First, stop the violence, [go] back to the dialogue, and address the root causes. For that, we have no time to lose. Now we are working very hard, but I am not able to predict any outcome of this. We are working very hard to make it happen as soon as possible, during my stay. I am still travelling from here. I am going to Jordan and Saudi Arabia to solicit all the support.

I just briefed the Security Council. The Security Council is debating this very serious crisis with a sense of urgency. I hope Security Council members will come out in a strong and determined way in one voice of the Security Council, urging the parties to stop and find a lasting solution. And this is a very important framework, that Security Council Resolution 1860 which was adopted in 2009 has not been implemented. The November 2012 ceasefire agreement has also not been implemented properly. That is why we are seeing the repetition of this crisis. So I think we must address this one in a comprehensive way. Once this is done, the United Nations, together with many donor countries, will mobilize full support to recover all this development and infrastructure. Thank you.

Q: [inaudible on the Human Rights Council]

SG: I know that the Human Rights Council is going to have a special session tomorrow. This is a decision of the Members States of the Human Rights Council, and I am closely following and coordinating with the Member States.

