



## Security Council SC/9826

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### ISRAEL, PALESTINIANS MUST DO MORE, JOINTLY WITH REVITALIZED QUARTET,

### TO PREVENT BACKWARD SLIDE IN PEACE EFFORTS, SECURITY COUNCIL TOLD

### Special Coordinator Calls on Parties to Ensure Calm, Fulfil Road Map Obligations

Israel, the Palestinians and a revitalized diplomatic Quartet must do more in concert to avert a backward slide in peace efforts, Roberterry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council today.

"We are in a race against time to overcome the contradictions on the ground and the crisis of confidence between the parties, and move decisively towards a political end game," said Mr. Serry, who is also Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority, during his regular monthly briefing to the Council.

He said Israel must implement its road map commitments, including those on settlements; ease measures that stifled the Palestinians; and be prepared "unambiguously" to negotiate and resolve all core issues, including Jerusalem, in a fixed time frame. It must also reduce its incursions into Palestinian areas, facilitate Palestinian development in Area C of the West Bank, and further ease the closures there, which currently stood at approximately 575 obstacles to free travel.

The Palestinians, he continued, must play their part by engaging constructively on efforts to bring about resumed negotiations in earnest, and by continuing to advance their important State-building progress and meeting their road map obligations. At the same time, there was a need to address the situation in Gaza by ending the blockade. All concerned must take responsible steps to ensure a period of calm.

Describing developments on the ground in the past month, he recalled that on 26 November, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had announced a 10-month freeze on new construction permits and starts, and inspectors had been visiting settlements to ensure compliance, amid protests from settler groups. However, construction already underway would continue and the restraint did not apply to activity in the Israeli-determined municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem. Although that policy was a step beyond previous positions, and was beset by domestic challenges, it fell considerably short of Israel's commitments under the road map, which must be fulfilled, he reiterated.

As for the Palestinian side, he said, their inability to hold elections decreed for 25 January 2010 had further deepened the internal crisis and presented new challenges for the Palestinian Authority, particularly given the decision by President Mahmoud Abbas not to run in any future elections. To deal with the situation, the Palestine Liberation Organization Central Council had convened on 15 and 16 December, deciding to extend the terms of the Presidency and the Legislative Council until elections could be held, as soon as possible in 2010. Hopefully, it would soon be possible to hold free and fair elections throughout the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Recalling that President Abbas had indicated his readiness to continue in office until elections, and had again called for a full Israeli settlement freeze in order to resume negotiations, Mr. Serry underscored full United Nations political and programme support for the Palestinian Authority's agenda. Palestinian security forces had continued their important responsibilities, often at risk, as shown by the attack on the Deputy Mayor of Nablus, and a fifth battalion of newly trained forces was due for deployment in the West Bank before the end of the year.

He said Israeli forces had arrested 172 Palestinians and injured 27 others in 64 security operations on the West Bank, in addition to defusing two explosive devices near a settlement. Six members of the Israeli forces had been injured. Demonstrations and clashes over the separation barrier had continued, as had settler attacks against Palestinian civilians, some in the context of settler protests against the settlement restraint announcement. Deploing a settler attack on a mosque, he noted that Israel continued to fall short of imposing the rule of law on violent extremists.

The situation in Jerusalem remained tense, he said, adding that there were reports of increased revocations of identity cards for Palestinian from East Jerusalem and that many properties remained under threat of demolition, amid other property struggles. United Nations calls for a moratorium on demolitions and evictions, along with an end to the installation of settlers in Palestinian neighbourhoods, had so far not been heeded. It was to be hoped that Prime Minister Netanyahu's appointment of a focal point on those issues meant a positive change that would allow the future of Jerusalem to be settled through negotiations.

Turning to Gaza, he said that, during the reporting period, imports remained at only one fourth the level they had been before the blockade, with food and hygiene items constituting the bulk, though there was an increase in the amount of cooking gas allowed into the Palestinian enclave. Energy was still hampered by fuel shortages, and it was to be hoped that ongoing talks with Israeli authorities would allow the timely meeting of urgent winter needs.

Voicing regret that the Israeli authorities had not permitted the resumption of stalled United Nations projects, and that smugglers and militants controlled commodities due to the destruction of legitimate commerce, he called for an end to the blockade, describing it as unacceptable and counterproductive, while admitting that Israel had legitimate security concerns about arms smuggling, given that a more powerful S-5K rocket had reportedly been fired on 5 December.

Noting Egypt's increased security efforts in border areas, he said violence in Gaza had been comparatively restrained during the reporting period. Palestinians had fired 10 rockets and mortars towards Israel, but they had caused no damage. Four alleged Palestinian militants had been injured by an Israeli air strike and Israeli forces had shot dead a Palestinian man near the border. Meanwhile, efforts continued to gain the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit, as well as a number of the more than 9,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Within Gaza, Hamas had imposed new measures on residents trying to pass into Israel, he said, adding that civil society organizations had been targeted by what appeared to be politically-motivated burglaries. In addition, 150 prisoners from all political factions had been released on a recent holiday, he said, calling on Hamas to act responsibly towards the population and more constructively on national reconciliation.

Turning to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, he said it remained stable, although settlement activity continued. However, a bill working its way through the Israeli legislature could make any future return of territory more complex.

As for Lebanon, he noted that the Government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, having officially assume its functions, had issued a ministerial statement affirming the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) in all its aspects, including the extension of Government authority over all national territory. The situation in the operational area of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had remained quiet, though air violations had continued on an almost daily basis.

Following the briefing, the representative of Libya took the floor to give an audio-visual presentation of severely injured Palestinian children and maps of settlement patterns. Noting that today's meeting would be the last that his delegation would be attending as a Council Member, he said it had worked cooperatively on the situation in the Middle East over the past two years, even going against its own principles occasionally in the interest of peace. However, nothing had happened after Israel's attack on Gaza and its destructive tactics against civilians and United Nations facilities in the territory, even after the release of a report alleging Israeli war crimes. Despite agreement on the illegality of the separation wall and new settlements, nothing had been done. Israel seemed to be above the law and any accountability.

Alleging further Israeli crimes in Gaza and the West Bank, he noted that a single Israeli soldier killed or taken prisoner occasioned great protest, while hundreds of Palestinians killed and thousands jailed were "par for the course". As for the settlements, he said maps showed the extinction of hopes for a viable Palestinian State. In sum, Security Council membership had been a bitter experience for Libya, he said, maintaining that force had overcome right.

The representative of the United States, responding to the Libyan statement, said she would express her full reaction in consultations, but commented that the better part of wisdom was to focus on the goal shared by all – a two-State solution. Any rhetorical presentation designed to inflame would not advance anyone's goal, and the United States would continue to work towards a negotiated solution.

The meeting began at 10:37 a.m. and ended at 11:07 a.m.

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