THE SECRETARY- GENERAL
REMARKS TO PRESS WITH DEFENSE MINISTER MOSHE YA'ALON
Tel Aviv, 22 July 2014

Thank you, Minister Ya'alon. Shalom.

Thank you very much for your time and welcoming me.

This is my third visit to Israel and the region in five years for an emergency mission. I have been visiting Israel many times but this time again I am coming with a heavy, heavy heart.

I fully appreciate the legitimate security concerns of the Israeli Government and people. You have a duty and responsibility to protect your citizens from indiscriminate rocket firings from Gaza by Hamas and Islamist jihadists. This is unacceptable. I strongly condemn that.

At the same time, your military response is now causing many civilian casualties and I mourn deeply the loss of life on both sides.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to see the end of this violence as soon as possible.

And that is why I am here. I am coming from Qatar and Kuwait and Cairo. During my three stops, I had very good meetings with the leaders in the region: Emir of Qatar, Emir of Kuwait and President Abbas of Palestine in Qatar. In Egypt, I had a very good meeting with President Sisi and Foreign Minister Shukri and then last night, I had a very in-depth discussion with John Kerry, US Secretary of State.

Now this is the most important part for me to visit and I am looking forward to discuss with [the] Israeli Government leadership including yourself Minister Ya'alon, Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Peres and Foreign Minister and all other distinguished leadership.

My message during [my] current visit, current mission has been three fold. First, stop the violence immediately. Second, return to dialogue, and put all the options on the table for discussion. And thirdly, we should address the root causes of this crisis. A return to the status quo ante will not be sustainable. We have to address all these pending issues and root causes. With that, United Nations is ready to help.

At the same time, I am very much grateful to you in your capacity as Minister for your very generous support for life-saving humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza through United Nations humanitarian projects. I hope you continue to discuss and cooperate with my Special Coordinator, Robert Serry. First and foremost, I am here to discuss with you and your leadership how to help end this fighting.

Thank you very much for that.

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