



Secretary-General

SG/SM/13484

GA/PAL/1190

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

STANDOFF IN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT UNTENABLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN MANY IN REGION

PURSUING FREEDOM THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL IN MESSAGE

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, as delivered by Oscar Fernandez Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, in Montevideo, 29 March:

It is my pleasure to send warm greetings to all the participants in the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for convening this timely session on "the urgency of realizing a two-State solution". I also express my gratitude to the host Government of Uruguay.

You gather at a crucial time. The target dates for reaching an Israeli-Palestinian agreement on permanent status issues and completing the Palestinian Authority's two-year State-building programme are fast-approaching. Yet, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remain at a worrying standstill.

We must intensify efforts to break the deadlock. The Quartet is substantively engaged with both parties to discuss how to restart the talks and work seriously towards an approach that will achieve Palestinian statehood. I once again call on the parties to do everything they can to enable such negotiations.

Actions that prejudice the outcome of the process must stop, including Israel's continued settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is illegal under international law and which contradicts the Road Map. Demolitions of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and the forced transfer of its Palestinian residents erode trust. All expressions of violence must stop, and their perpetrators brought to justice. There must also be strong action against incitement or glorification of violent acts.

Despite continued uncertainty, I am encouraged by the Palestinian Authority's efforts to establish viable State institutions, which form the basis of a future State. I urge the donor community to continue to support the Palestinian Authority and its reform agenda. I also commend the efforts of the Palestinian security forces to maintain security in areas under their control in the West Bank. Israel must take further steps to improve economic and security conditions by reducing obstacles to movement, halting military operations, and enabling the Palestinian Authority's access to Areas B and C.

The situation in Gaza remains unsustainable. I call on Israel to further open the crossings in line with [Security Council resolution 1860](#) (2009), and to work towards lifting the closure. I am very concerned at continued violent tensions that put civilians in danger. I condemn escalating rocket fire from Gaza towards Israel, which indiscriminately targets civilians, and the killing and wounding of Gaza civilians, including children, by Israeli fire. I reiterate my strong condemnation of the recent deadly bomb attack in West Jerusalem. Both sides must protect civilians and act in conformity with international law to prevent further escalation and loss of life. It is also important to respond to the legitimate calls of the Palestinian people for reunification. The United Nations will continue to encourage efforts aimed at advancing intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long overdue. The status quo is untenable, particularly at a time when so many throughout the region are pursuing freedom and dignity through non-violence — a re-awakening also being felt among the Palestinians.

Time is of the essence in realizing the two-State solution. The occupation that started in 1967 is morally and politically unsustainable, and must end. The Palestinians have a legitimate right to the establishment of an independent and viable State of their own. Israel has the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders. A way must be found for Jerusalem to emerge as a capital of two States, Israel and Palestine, with arrangements for holy sites acceptable for all. And there must be a just and agreed solution to the prolonged plight of the Palestinian refugees.

The two-State solution is in the best interest of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Serious efforts must now be exerted to bring the parties back to the negotiating table as soon as possible, based on existing agreements between the parties, the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. For my part, I will continue to do everything in my power to support efforts aimed at this crucial objective. The strong support of the Latin American countries is important and welcome. In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful Meeting.

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