

OFF-THE-CUFF**Secretary-General's remarks to the press with the Foreign Minister of Egypt****[Q&A below]****Cairo, Egypt, 21 July 2014**

Assalamu Alaikum. Good evening.

I am very pleased to visit Egypt as again as SG and I am very much pleased to visit Egypt so soon after the inauguration of President [Abdel Fattah Al] Sisi as President of Egypt and also [Foreign] Minister [Sameh Hassan] Shokry [Selim]. We have known each other a long time and I am very pleased to work together with Minister Shokry.

Egypt is a strong partner, traditionally, since the beginning of this Organization, and we depend a lot on Egypt. Egypt is a regional and global power in peace and security, development, and human rights. And we appreciate and commend their contribution to the United Nations' goals and objectives.

This time, I am visiting Egypt with a single purpose of helping Egypt's diplomatic efforts to bring an end to this violence which is now happening in the Middle East.

I have been in this country just a few hours, but I have had very good discussions with Minister Shokry on how the United Nations can help the Egyptian initiative to bring an end to this violence.

I am in support of Mr. Minister, your, and President Sisi's efforts to stop the fighting in Gaza and the rocket attacks in Israel. I am grateful for the Government of Egypt's leadership in mediating a durable peace.

This is a time of profound challenge in the region.

Yet again, too many civilians, including so many children, are paying the price for the latest escalation.

The images we see sear the soul.

I urge all parties to rally behind collective international efforts to end the fighting. That is why I am here in Cairo.

I carry two important messages.

The first: The violence must stop – it must stop now.

All sides must provide the necessary space to aid the victims, assist the wounded, and extend the relief to trapped civilians. These immediate steps should open the door to a more permanent ceasefire.

Second, we cannot claim victory by simply returning matters to where they stood before the latest terrible bloodshed.

Going back to the status quo ante won't solve the problem, it will only defer it for another day.

It will not stop the bloodshed, it will make it even worse the next time the cycle rolls over the people of Gaza and plagues the people of Israel.

Gaza is an open wound and Band Aids won't help.

There must be a plan after the aftermath that allows Gaza to breathe and heal.

Recovery and reconstruction is more needed than ever.

The United Nations will continue to support these efforts.

I am so proud that many UN workers, with UNRWA in the lead, [are] helping the population of Gaza under such dramatic circumstances.

I am grateful and happy to see that you have opened the Rafah crossing for urgent humanitarian relief. I hope you will continue to open this Rafah crossing.

The needs and demands are rising dramatically. There are now well over 80,000 Palestinians seeking life-saving shelter and relief in UNRWA schools.

That is almost 5 percent of the entire population.

Countries cannot build a future if their people must continually run for cover.

Palestinians and Israelis deserve freedom – freedom from siege, rockets, missiles, artillery and airstrikes.

They deserve a future of hope, peace and justice.

I will continue to support all efforts to build that future.

We must find answers – lasting solutions – guided by a sense of compassion and our common humanity.

Thank you. Shukran.

Q: [inaudible in Arabic]

SG: I am here, as I said, to help the parties, particularly the Egyptian proposal, to be accepted by the two parties, Israelis and Hamas. What we have seen during the last several days is a totally unacceptable and intolerable situation. More than 500 people have been killed and more than 2,600 people had been injured. We must bring an end to this violence as soon as possible. I said that it must stop now. That is why I am here now, together with many world leaders who have already visited this region, and I am also going to have close cooperation with Secretary of State of the United States John Kerry, who is going to visit soon. And I have already visited Qatar, and I met the Emir and I met there President [Mahmoud] Abbas of Palestine. I am coming from Kuwait after having met the Emir and I am heading to Israel and Palestine tomorrow. Then all these are the continuing effort of the international community and also by the United Nations.

I believe that when the parties have not been able to resolve all this through political negotiation, and there have been [many] grievances and concerns and discontent, again the best way, at this time, is to stop the violence and return to dialogue and address the root causes of the problems. It may take time. I was disappointed when these nine-month-long negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis have not yielded any result. I again urge that they resume this dialogue, and before that they must end the violence now so that the United Nations and the international community and the regional powers can help those people recover and those wounded people heal. That is humanity – that you cannot go on like this, killing people, each other.

And I am again urging the two parties to unconditionally stop and return to dialogue. When you stop this dialogue, returning to status quo ante will not be a sustainable one. You have to address the root causes. The United Nations will continue to stand by with the people of Israel and the people of Palestine so that they can find a lasting peace so that they can live in peace and security together.

Q: Regarding the Egyptian initiative, you said that the United Nations supports the initiative. However, so far, one side of the conflict has not accepted it. Would you support an easing of the economic blockade on Gaza in order for an amended initiative to succeed? Thank you.

SG: To make durable peace between Israel and the Palestinian people, lifting this restriction in Gaza has been a very important one, and the United Nations has been continuously demanding and urging Israeli authorities to lift all the restrictions. By imposing restrictions, it has affected the economic situation of the Gazan people. Of course the United Nations has been working very hard to deliver necessary humanitarian assistance, building schools and providing health and sanitation facilities, providing education. But there is a limit, and imposing this restriction will really hamper free movement of goods and people, and I know that this is one of the conditions Hamas has been presenting as a condition to support the Egyptian proposal. But at this time, what is important [is] that we need to address this issue through dialogue, but first and foremost, the violence, both parties must stop violence and return to dialogue. That is my strong [urging].

Q: Arabic (inaudible)

SG: The killing of more than 60 people in Shejaiyah neighborhood yesterday was a very saddening and terrible killings, and I have strongly condemned [this] yesterday in my statement. There may be more people killed if this continues. That is why I am asking again, without any conditions, they must stop. I know that this proposal suggested by the Egyptian Government has been rejected by certain conditions. If you really want to discuss all these conditions, it will take a long time. In the course of these discussions on those conditions which have been there for a long time which unfortunately have not been resolved between the parties, then what is most important is that just continuing to kill people will not help any purpose of any side. Therefore, I am urging that unconditionally this violence must stop by both sides and enter into negotiations, dialogue, and we are ready to facilitate such a dialogue, and there are many partners who are really willing to support that kind of process, including Egypt.

Off-the-Cuff on 21 July 2014

- [Cairo, Egypt - Secretary-General's press remarks prior to meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry](#)

