



## Security Council SC/10093

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

Security Council  
6430<sup>th</sup> Meeting (AM)

### **PRESENT 'DELICATE PERIOD' WILL DETERMINE FATE OF RESUMPTION OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TALKS, CHIEF UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL AFFAIRS OFFICIAL TELLS SECURITY COUNCIL**

#### **B. Lynn Pascoe, in Monthly Briefing, Says Diplomatic Impasse Over Settlement Construction since End of 26 September Moratorium 'Worrying'**

"We are in the midst of a delicate period which will determine whether a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks is possible," the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs told the Security Council today, adding that the continued diplomatic impasse over settlement construction since the moratorium ended on 26 September was worrying.

In his monthly briefing to the Council on the situation in the Middle East, B. Lynn Pascoe said: "In the period ahead, we must work to bring about a return to direct talks between the parties and to support an atmosphere on the ground conducive to quick and concrete progress in those talks, including a freeze on settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." He added that efforts were continuing to bring the parties back to the negotiating table.

He said there had been significant construction in a number of settlements since the expiry of the moratorium, as well as announcements of plans to construct more than 1,500 settlement units in parts of East Jerusalem, and 800 units in the Ariel settlement deep inside the West Bank. Noting that, in a letter of 10 November to the Council, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations had raised concerns about the impact of that renewed settlement activity on the prospects for talks, he said: "We call on Israel to fulfil its Road Map obligation to freeze illegal settlement construction and not to implement plans for additional settlement units."

The diplomatic Quartet had previously reiterated that the annexation of East Jerusalem was not recognized by the international community and that the status of Jerusalem was a permanent status issue to be resolved through negotiations, he said.

He reported that the Palestinian Authority's State-building agenda continued to advance steadily, in accordance with Palestinian National Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's strategy, but noted that the strategy required adequate and sustainable financial backing. Palestinian security forces continued to maintain law and order and to fight extremism, in accordance with Palestinian Road Map obligations, and the number of violent incidents in the West Bank had declined.

Israeli security forces had conducted 371 operations in the West Bank, in which 87 Palestinians had been injured and 211 arrested, while four Israelis had been injured, he said. Fifteen attacks by Palestinians on Israeli settlers had resulted in injuries to four Israelis. During the current olive harvesting season, attacks by Israeli settlers, including arson and the uprooting of thousands of olive trees belonging to Palestinians, were reported on an almost daily basis. Other attacks by Israeli settlers had included the desecration of a Palestinian cemetery. Fourteen Palestinians had been injured during 29 attacks by Israeli settlers. Construction on the barrier continued, in contravention of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion.

The humanitarian community had finalized its consolidated appeal for 2011, he said. It would be presented in Brussels, Belgium, on 30 November. He urged donors to fully support the appeal, in order to prevent further deterioration in living conditions, especially in areas beyond Palestinian Authority control, such as Gaza and Area C of the West Bank.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he said that during the reporting period, Palestinian militant groups had fired 8 rockets and 41 mortars into Israel. In a worrying escalation, Palestinian militant groups had fired four phosphorous mortar shells into Israel on 19 November. During Israeli air strikes and incursions into the Strip, four Palestinian militants had been killed, including three who died in targeted killings. Twenty civilians had been injured and three Palestinians had died in accidents while working in the smuggling tunnels.

The priority of the United Nations remained the rebuilding of a viable Gazan economy, Mr. Pascoe said. That would take time, he added, but a range of important steps that could begin the process included the resumption of exports, free movement of people into and out of Gaza, the return of the Palestinian Authority to the crossings and access to agricultural land along the Gaza border and to currently prohibited fishing areas. He called on Israel to facilitate the timely entry of construction material for implementation of approved United Nations work and to allow United Nations agencies to continue to expand the flow of reconstruction works in the Gaza Strip.

Although there had been an increase in the weekly number of truckloads entering the Gaza Strip to 1,026, up from 940, during the last reporting period, he said, the total number of truckloads still fell short of the 2,800 entering Gaza in June 2007 on a weekly basis. Noting that the water and sanitation situation in Gaza remained dire, he appealed to donors to assist in funding the outstanding \$40 million required for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Khan Younis wastewater project.

Representatives of Fatah and Hamas had met in Damascus on 9 November for further discussion on Palestinian reconciliation, but reports had indicated that the meeting was inconclusive, he said. Noting that more than 1,600 days had passed since the capture of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, he reiterated the United Nations call for his immediate release and for granting humanitarian access without conditions. There had been no apparent progress on efforts to complete a prisoner exchange for some of the 9,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Turning to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, he said that the situation there had remained stable. The Israeli Government had encouraged further settlement activity through its 2 November announcement of an initiative to give 140 one-dunum (1,000 square metres) plots of land free to Israeli settlers. Also, the Knesset had passed legislation on 22 November that required a two-thirds majority or, failing that, a national referendum to approve return of any occupied territory in East Jerusalem or the Syrian Golan in the context of any political settlement.

In conclusion, he said that the Secretary-General remained committed to working with the parties and his international partners for an end of the occupation that began in 1967, the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Council was last briefed on the situation in the Middle East on 18 October. (See Press Release [SC/10059](#)) It was briefed in closed consultations on the situation in Lebanon on 18 November.

Called to order at 10:11 a.m., the meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

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