

Statement by the High Commissioner at the Special Meeting of the Human Rights Council on the occasion of the visit of the President of the State of Palestine

السيد الرئيس

اسمحوا لي ان ارحب بفخامة الرئيس محمود عباس في مجلس حقوق الانسان، و كنت اود ان تكون الظروف وسياق زيارة الرئيس عباس غير تلك التي نحن بصدها اليوم، ولكنني على ثقة كبيرة بقدرة القيادة الفلسطينية بالاستمرار بالسعي لتحقيق السلام و امانى الشعب الفلسطيني بالاستقلال وانشاء دولته المستقلة.

"Mr. President,

Please allow me to welcome H.E President Mahmoud Abbas to the Human Rights Council. I wish the circumstances and the context of his visit were more positive, but I have confidence in the ability of Palestine leadership to continue to seek peace, and to realise the aspirations of the Palestinian people in an independent State".

Mr President,
Distinguished Members of the Council,
Excellencies,

The violence between Palestinians and the Israelis will draw us ever closer to a catastrophe if not stopped immediately.

The latest wave of violence has resulted in 58 Palestinian deaths, with 2100 wounded; and 11 Israeli deaths, with 127 wounded. Some of these people were stabbed, shot, and even beaten to death by members of the public, both Israeli and Palestinian. In the context of suspected attacks, several Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces, sometimes allegedly acting with disproportionate force, to the extent that extra-judicial killings are strongly suspected. In other incidents, Palestinians involved in demonstrations in the West Bank and along the Gaza fence have been reportedly shot by security forces using live ammunition – raising strong concerns again about excessive use of force. The stabbing and shooting and car attacks that have targeted Israelis are also totally unjustifiable. No matter what the grievances on both sides, violence cannot be the answer.

This crisis is dangerous in the extreme because it is a confrontation drawn in part from that most combustible of human emotional mechanisms: fear. It is a confrontation between peoples who fear each other, who fear the corresponding motives of each other, and so fear the future. Fears that, unless checked quickly, become in time so raw, so stark -- for many considerations of humanity will become secondary the longer this crisis continues. There will be no mutual accommodation, no mutual acceptance, no warmth, no peace, only hate and bloodshed, and fear mixing, constantly, both into a poison for all. And the fears of one people are deepened by the actions and words of the other, also carved from fear, and heightened on both sides by visceral rage.

A catastrophe becomes more likely because of the supremely sensitive issue of the *status quo* with respect to occupied East Jerusalem, and specifically the site that is known to Muslims as the *Al Aqsa* compound or the *Haram Al Sharif*, and to Jews as the Temple Mount. For Palestinians, and the Arab and Muslim worlds generally, their fear has centred on the perceived increasing aggressiveness of Israeli attitudes toward this compound, strongly suggesting a desire to alter the *status quo*. The Israeli government says this fear is misplaced, and believes that rumours have inflamed passions; repeated assurances have been given by the Prime Minister that there is no threat to the *al Aqsa* compound. Instead, the government fears the Palestinians are stoking resentment and anger to incite violence against Israel and Israelis – and that the Palestinians are ultimately responsible for this violence.

Fear, as the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, used to say, "is a bad advisor".

The spate of stabbings and shootings, car attacks and deadly beatings – which are all fuelled by incitement from people on both sides – now simmers. But tensions are very high. There is a growing possibility if this violence continues to sharpen, along religious lines, we will draw closer to the makings of a broader, and much more terrible, confrontation. The region, already imperilled, does not need this.

Fear must be eclipsed by wisdom.

The knifings must stop. The incitement and car attacks must stop; the shootings and beatings must cease. Impunity for human rights violations, and violations of international humanitarian law should end, and there must be justice for the victims. The actions by the settler movement throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem, must be halted. The excessive use of force by Israeli military and police, house demolitions and other collective punishments also cannot be permitted to continue. The blockade of Gaza must be ended.

In other words, the Middle East peace process must now be reactivated with an unprecedented sense of purpose. A lasting peace must now be obtained. Israel has to be assured its security for good, and not remain the object of any threat to it or its people. And the occupation, which has caused the Palestinian people such intense suffering for almost fifty years, generating rage and resentment – the occupation must end too. The people of Palestine, Mr. President, deserve to live free, and in dignity, enjoying their full human rights, in their own liberated state of Palestine.

- See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16665&LangID=E#sthash.NVjV0StB.dpuf>