



STATEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE EU

Human Rights Council 28th Special Session - "The human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory" - EU statement

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania[*], the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is deeply alarmed by the sharp escalation of violence and loss of human lives in the occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, resulting in a high number of Palestinians killed and injured. We express our grave concern over the escalation of violence and the use of excessive force including live fire. It is important that the Human Rights Council shows responsibility by convening this special session.

While recognizing the right to protect its territory, we expect Israel to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest and the principle of proportionality in the use of force when defending its legitimate security interest. Israeli security forces must refrain from the excessive use of force against unarmed civilians. Lethal use of force should be exercised with maximum restraint, and only as a last resort to protect life. Hamas and

those leading the protests in Gaza have a responsibility to avoid provocations and ensure that protests are not misused by extremist elements and remain strictly non-violent.

An independent and transparent investigation of human rights violations committed by all parties would shed light on what happened and why. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by States and non-State actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security.

The worsening humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza strip remains of grave concern. All parties must guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza for international and humanitarian organisations as well as EU bodies and Member States, and fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. The EU calls on Israel to approve measures to provide immediate relief in Gaza, including facilitating access to medical care, as well as on all competent actors to facilitate the entry of both much needed personnel and medical supplies.

The EU reiterates its longstanding position and calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and an opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. In this regard, the failure of the intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts is worrisome.

During these days, both Israelis and Palestinians are commemorating defining moments for their nations. Each side in this conflict has legitimate claims and aspirations which need to be mutually acknowledged.

Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Muslims and Christians. The ties of the Jewish people to Jerusalem are irrefutable, and must not be denied. And the same is true for the ties of the Palestinian people – both Muslims and Christians – to the city.

Any further escalation of an already extremely tense and complex situation would cause again suffering to both peoples, and make the perspective of peace and security even more remote. In this moment, wisdom and courage is needed to go back to negotiations for a political solution, for the sake both of the Israeli and the Palestinian people, and the entire region. Only a two-State solution will realistically allow both sides to fulfil their aspirations, put an end to the conflict, and achieve the just and lasting peace that Israelis and Palestinians long for and deserve.

The EU remains firmly committed to continue working with both parties and with its partners in the international community towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations aimed at a two-State solution, based on the 4 June 1967 lines and with Jerusalem as capital of both.

The European Union has a clear, consolidated position on Jerusalem, reaffirmed in numerous Foreign Affairs Council conclusions and in the European Council Conclusions

of 14 December 2017, and will continue to respect the international consensus embodied in, inter alia, relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Thank you, Mr. President.

[*]The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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