

STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

BY AMBASSADOR NEVILLE GERTZE
VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF
THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

OPEN DEBATE
ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

New York, 28 October 2022

Mister President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Committee, I congratulate Gabon for its capable presidency of the Security Council during October and thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

Mister President,

The Committee is alarmed by the dangerous escalation in Israeli military raids across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This is dramatically destabilizing the situation and taking us further away from the international consensus to achieve a just peace in the Middle East, as outlined in international law and countless UN resolutions, most recently in SC resolution 2334 (2016). Israeli military raids in Jenin and Nablus, as well as in other areas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are exacerbating an already dangerous situation and leading to the killing and injury of more civilians, including women and children.

There is no justification for killing civilians. We urge an immediate lowering of tensions and the exercise of maximum restraint in full adherence to the law, including international humanitarian law, and reiterate the imperative of ensuring accountability for unlawful and excessive use of force in accordance with international law.

Violence is not the answer.

Mister President,

The situation in Jerusalem deserves renewed attention. Repeated provocations and violations of the historic and legal status quo by Israel, the occupying Power, at Al-Aqsa Mosque must end. The consensus is clear, such provocative rhetoric and actions inflame tensions and threaten to ignite yet another needless cycle of violence. The Committee reiterates that the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem must be upheld and respected by all parties.

The ongoing expansion of illegal settlements and settler-related violence needs decisive action. Last week, Israel approved hundreds of new settlement units in northern Jerusalem, adding to the plight of Palestinians who suffer discrimination and dispossession in their own city in flagrant breach of international law and relevant UN resolutions. Such illegal actions reinforce hopelessness, undermine the viability of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders, and are a flagrant obstruction of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

In her first report to the UN General Assembly, Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, notes the illegality of the Israeli occupation as it has “proven not to be temporary, is deliberately administered against the best interests of the occupied population and has resulted in the annexation of occupied territory.”

We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to adhere to its obligations, reverse the trend towards dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians, and to halt the transfer of its own population to the occupied territory, which it continues to systematically carry out in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

Settlements and annexation are not the answer.

Mister President,

The Committee condemns in the strongest of terms Israel's relentless targeting and shrinking of Palestinian civil society space. Civil society organizations are a pillar to democracy and their ability to operate freely is a pre-requisite for an inclusive society. We call on Israel to uphold its obligations as the occupying Power towards the Palestinian people in line with international law, including their basic civil rights and freedom of expression, and to reverse its baseless decision to outlaw six Palestinian civil society organizations on the grounds of being "terrorist organizations."

We also call on Israel to fully lift its 15-year illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip and to cease its obstruction of the efforts to strengthen the foundations for a Palestinian state living along Israel in peace and security, including all policies that have resulted in the de-development of Gaza. This is paramount for reversing the steep deteriorating socio-economic situation in Gaza and undoing the fragmentation of the Palestinian people.

A land, air and sea blockade is not the answer.

We note with appreciation the international community's generous contributions to UNRWA. However, the Agency remains in dire need of sustainable and predictable funding to meet the urgent needs of millions of Palestine refugees, thus contributing to stability in the Middle East. We urge Member States to renew the mandate of UNRWA when it comes for a vote this session in the General Assembly and equally to continue their financial support to the Agency, including the possibility of expanded UN budgetary support to ensure the continuity of its vital humanitarian programs.

Mister President,

Violations of international law, human rights abuses, and violence push back the day when Palestinians can enjoy their inalienable rights and achieve independence. It is imperative to restore calm and create the right conditions on the ground to bring a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, a key to global sustainable peace.

We welcome the recent signing of the Algeria Declaration of National Reconciliation by Palestinian factions; this is a step towards national unity and holding the long awaited Palestinian legislative and presidential elections. We thank the Algerian government for facilitating this important agreement.

However, more work is needed. The status quo is unsustainable. The international community, including members of the Security

Council, must act immediately to prevent further deterioration of an already fragile situation. The only way forward is through visible progress towards a political horizon that brings an end to the Israeli occupation and brings the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees. Palestine must become a Member State of the United Nations, taking its rightful place among the international community.

The people of Palestine need our solidarity. From this rostrum, the Committee invites all Members States to attend this year's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2022 in the ECOSOC Chamber. Let us use this solemn event to reiterate our steadfast commitment to inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Seventy-five years since the partition by the General Assembly it is high time to achieve justice for the Palestinian people.

Mister President,

The Committee will continue to fully support all efforts to achieve the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security.

This injustice can only be resolved by implementing the parameters that have already been identified according to international law, UN resolutions and past agreements between the parties to ensure

the promise of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 lines and with East Jerusalem as its capital, where the Palestinian people can realize their freedom and live in peace, stability and dignity.

A just and lasting peace is the answer.
