

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEDIA STAKEOUT BY THE UN SENIOR HUMANITARIAN
AND RECONSTRUCTION COORDINATOR FOR GAZA, MS. SIGRID KAAG,
FOLLOWING HER CLOSED BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL,**

New York, 10 December 2024

I have just briefed the Security Council, as you know, in close session about the utterly devastating situation in Gaza. I've spoken about of the inhumane conditions in which our fellow human beings, civilians are trying to survive, the young and the old. We've also spoken of course of the context and our hope for a ceasefire and the unconditional release of the hostages, and that this would enable, obviously a further surge of assistance, but ultimately, I have painted a very very bleak picture as civilians in Gaza continue to suffer. And I've mentioned to the Council Members that I visited Gaza in the course of my life, different professional roles since end of the eighties, as a volunteer, I visited as a UN staff member, I visited as a UNICEF Regional Director and in 2020 as a Minister. But nothing prepares you for what you see, what you hear and the conversations you're having with your fellow human beings, Palestinians in Gaza.

These impediments that the UN faces, that civilian faces, severely obstructs the ultimate goal that aid reaches civilians. I've reminded the Council that from April this year, I've spoken about the risk of a breakdown of law and order and particularly lawlessness, the looting, that's only of course exacerbated in already very difficult situation. It also impacts what's left of the social fabric and social stability

We've also seen in Gaza, and the Council spoke on that a lot also this afternoon, that if and when there's political will, we can work. If the parties have agreements and they are adhered to, such as with the polio campaign, we can reach people.

Now since my last briefing in September, I've continued to engage with key governments and I've advocated at the highest levels. We've also discussed and submitted again to the Israeli Government our proposals, our asks, some of them are long-standing, some are, were new or an augmentation for instance of course, the need, the acute need for winterization materials, for health materials and all of the essential supplies that are so much lacking in Gaza.

I've also discussed, of course with Israeli Government officials what is the very clear United Nations line on the mandate of UNRWA, on the indispensable role the agency plays, particularly in Gaza but not only in Gaza, and you know that the Secretary-General has been very clear on this.

What we also need when we speak about assistance to Gaza is the re-opening of Rafah Border Crossing. We've had a very good conference in Egypt, in Cairo graciously hosted and co-organized

with the Government of Egypt, it put Gaza again on the spotlight, the prepositioning, the goods and what could be done via the Egyptian route if Rafah is re-opened.

Gaza also of course needs the restart of the commercial sector. People want to buy, they want to see a great diversity of goods and we need to keep pushing for a broadening of what is considered dual-use goods. But we cannot meet the needs of civilians in Gaza even through a humanitarian pipeline as much as it can be ramped up and scaled up without the commercial sector, is as simply not possible. And ultimately, and it's a discussion that came back this afternoon a lot as well, we need to have clarity on the governance and security arrangements for Gaza. Now the voice of the international community and the position is clear, we need a return of the PA, they have the plans for early recovery and reconstruction, they have the staff, we can help organize the financing and the United Nations, and many other partners, NGOs, Palestinians NGOs and International NGOs can work to further those goals, to realize statehood, a Palestinian State alongside a safe and secure Israel.

Last but not least, I've also briefed on what we've done in the course of this twelve months period. We've negotiated the access. We have kept at the highest levels the contacts with every Foreign Minister. I engage continuously with the Israeli Government at all levels. We continued to discuss, we have helped organize and negotiate and establish all the routes from Cyprus, from Egypt, from Jordan, procurement from Israel and the West Bank. We've also established a database. We have a pre-notification system, an approval system, monitors are in Gaza under 2720 as we speak. So all this across country operation has been established, negotiated and ultimately we have established the trust and the continued negotiations and conversations with the parties.

Does it meet all the needs of people in Gaza, this is a far cry, and I've said this to the Council, there's no substitute, no system can and will substitute or compensate for an absence or lack of political will. This is political, political will and political choice. This you cannot ask of the UN, of the humanitarians, this is where Member States and the parties are at play.

Thank you