

All parties to Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be open to further dialogue

Thank you Madam President, and my thanks to the Special Coordinator for his briefing, and the quarterly report on implementation of resolution 2334.

I'd also like to thank Mai Farsakh and Meredith Rothbart for their remarks, their insights and your work on the ground. And I'd like to pay tribute too to them and to all those in civil society who work to build social peace and the foundations for peace.

Madam President, the United Kingdom welcomes recent engagement between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian leadership, including the meeting between Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Defence Minister Gantz on 29 August. We urge further direct engagement and call on both parties to work together to tackle immediate and long-term threats to peace and stability. While appreciating the difficulties on both sides, we urge all parties to be open to further dialogue.

The UK wants to see greater cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, including on economic initiatives, to help support the recovery of Gaza, boost the Palestinian economy and improve the lives of all Palestinians living in the OPTs.

However, these initiatives need to be part of a political pathway. All parties need to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions, and to avoid unhelpful rhetoric. Existing agreements must be respected and all parties must refrain from harmful unilateral actions.

Madam President, we remain concerned by Israel's ongoing settlement expansion, as well as the demolition of Palestinian property and resultant displacement of protected persons, such as prospective demolitions and evictions in Silwan, Walaja, and Sheikh Jarrah. We urge Israel to allow for more legal avenues for Palestinian construction.

As has been noted previously, we have seen a worrying upward trend in Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces' live fire throughout 2021; particularly around Beita where eight Palestinians have been killed by the Israel Defence Forces since May. We urge restraint on all sides. Israeli investigations should be transparent, comprehensive and, where there has been excessive use of force, those responsible held to account.

We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinian civilians and aid workers. We express particular concern about the reported attack on 15-year-old Palestinian, Tareq Zubeidi, on 17 August. Communities must be protected from violence and harassment. Such incidents must be investigated fully and those responsible brought to justice.

Madam President, we continue to call on the Palestinian Authority to adhere to international standards on freedom of expression, association and assembly and urge respect for human rights. Reform is needed to rebuild trust with the public.

I reiterate that the UK condemns unequivocally Hamas's indiscriminate attacks against Israel, including the use of incendiary balloons. We call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their rocket fire against Israel.

Finally Madam President, turning to Gaza, the UK welcomed Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid's speech proposing positive policy suggestions to support economic development in Gaza and greater security for Israel. A long-term solution for Gaza is needed not only to end the cycle of violence, but also to make progress towards the two-state solution: a solution to which the UK remains firmly committed.