

Preventing further escalation of violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Thank you Mr President, and my thanks to Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Let me start by once again reinforcing the need to prevent a further escalation in violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to restore calm. We share concerns about the recent tensions in Gaza and call on all parties to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions and to maintain the cessation of hostilities. The United Kingdom condemns unequivocally Hamas' 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.

Our attention must remain on the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the impact on Palestinians living there. It remains vital that Israel ensures regularised access into and out of Gaza, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, especially for humanitarian actors and goods, reconstruction materials, and for medical purposes.

In the West Bank, we should all be troubled by the high number of Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli Forces in recent weeks. Since our most recent debate on 28 July, 9 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including two children. We urge the Israeli authorities to conduct transparent and comprehensive investigations, and to hold those responsible to account.

In regards to the handling of recent protests, we call on the Palestinian Authority to adhere to international standards on freedom of expression, association and assembly and urge respect for human rights. The use of violence against peaceful human rights defenders, activists and protesters, and the mistreatment of those detained is unacceptable.

In Jerusalem, we remain concerned by the high number of evictions and demolitions, including in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and al Walaja. Unfortunately, in 2021 we have seen the pace of these unilateral Israeli actions increase across the West Bank. We urge Israel to refrain from actions which displace Palestinians from their homes, act as a driver for conflict and are, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, illegal under international law. It is also vital to maintain calm on Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and to uphold the historic Status Quo.

Mr President, against this fragile backdrop, we continue to see signs of hope. We were pleased to see Palestinian and Israeli firefighters working together to extinguish fires in Jerusalem. We want to see greater coordination and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly

on economic initiatives, to help pave a pathway toward peace. The first anniversary of the signing of the Abraham Accords this month is a reminder that the advancement of peace is possible.

We welcome and urge continued engagement between the new Israeli Government and the Palestinian leadership and call on both parties to work together to tackle immediate and long-term threats to peace and stability. Our collective goal remains a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines.

The United Kingdom stands ready to support.