

Restoring prospect of peace in Middle East is 'our shared responsibility' UN envoy tells Security Council

Violence is on the rise in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israeli authorities are continuing to demolish and confiscate Palestinian-owned homes and property, in contravention of international law, the United Nations envoy for the Middle East Peace Process said on Thursday.

Briefing the Security Council, Nikolay Mladenov called on Israel to stop the demolitions, adding that a negotiated resolution of the so-called final status issues – as defined by Israelis and Palestinians themselves – was essential for any lasting peace settlement.

“It is our shared responsibility to restore that prospect, to facilitate negotiations, to help the weaker party, to insulate the process from radicals and extremists and to show results.”

Speaking via video link, UN Special Coordinator Mladenov also strongly condemned the killing of an Israeli man and woman by a Palestinian assailant in an industrial area in the West Bank, on 7 October, as well as of a Palestinian woman allegedly stoned to death by Israeli assailants, near a checkpoint in Nablus, on 12 October.

“I extend my condolences to the bereaved families. Such incidents must be condemned in the strongest of terms, and I call on everyone to stand up to violence and condemn terrorism,” he stressed.

‘Gaza is imploding ... It is a reality’

Turning to Gaza, Mr. Mladenov said that protests at the border fence which began in March, have expanded to include night demonstrations, and Hamas – which controls the Strip – and other militants, continue to send incendiary kites and balloons across the border, causing fires on the Israeli side, prompting Israeli forces to respond with live ammunition.

The humanitarian and economic situation in the enclave remains dire, he added, noting extremely high rates of unemployment and poverty, with every second person in Gaza now living below the poverty line.

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conflict that nobody claims to want, but a conflict that needs much more than just words to prevent.”

The senior UN official also asked Security Council members to urge all sides “to step back from the brink” and adhere to the 2014 ceasefire agreement.

“ Hamas and other militant groups must immediately and effectively stop all provocations,” he said, adding that “ Israel must restore the delivery of critical supplies to Gaza and improve the movement and access of goods and people [and] exercise maximum restraint in the use of live ammunition,” he said.

He also called on the Palestinian Authority not to disengage from Gaza and to continue working with the international community to help alleviate the suffering of its people in Gaza.

Mr. Mladenov also recalled the September ministerial meeting on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), on the margins of the General Assembly’s high-level general debate, which raised some \$122 million, but added that a “significant” funding gap remains.

Also addressing the Security Council, Hagai El-Ad from the Israeli non-governmental organization B’tselem, was invited to speak, and noted the hardship that Palestinians face across the board. The NGO is known as the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, and works towards ending occupation.

“It is hard to articulate the flesh and blood meaning of the exposed lives Palestinians endure under occupation,” he said, calling on Security Council members to act to reduce their suffering.