

Speech: Condemning attacks from Gaza into Israel and calling for direct negotiations for two-state solution

Thank you very much indeed Madam President and thank you to the Special Co-ordinator for that very sobering briefing.

Echoing Ambassador Haley's concern, I condemn without qualification, in the strongest terms, yesterday's mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable and they are unjustifiable. Those that risk killing or injuring children are heinous. These attacks can't be ignored by the Council. The UK fully supports Israel's right to self-defense and the right to defend their citizens from such acts of terror. The recent spike in rocket attacks from Gaza is a stark reminder that the risk of a renewed conflict is very much present and I think the Special Co-ordinator brought that out very starkly in his briefing today. The latest attacks follow the deaths of over a hundred Palestinians in recent weeks of protests, and the Council has addressed that previously. Civilians live in fear and in despair. Further escalation of violence risks a devastating effect on efforts to restore the peace process and can only bring renewed suffering for the region. As Council members, we should act to ensure that this doesn't come to fruition.

The situation in Gaza, Madam President, is undeniably dangerous, it is sad and it is complex. The perpetual cycle of violence needs to end and serves no one's interests. The actions of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad represent real and concerning threat to Israeli security. Ultimately, the ongoing decisions of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to embrace violence and reject the Quartet principles lie at the heart of the Gaza situation. We should use this Council session today to demand that Hamas and other terrorist groups cease all violent and provocative actions and cease any and all actions that put civilian lives at risk.

At the same time, we do not ignore the significant contribution that restrictions on movement and access imposed on Gaza have on the dire humanitarian situation that we witness. The United Kingdom continues its support for the full return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, and we encourage further progress on reconciliation.

An end to this violence requires a tangible path for changing Gaza and what the Special Coordinator had to say about the plan was very interesting. We believe it's the responsibility of the international community to work together to find a way to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Gaza. We welcome the proposals that Mr Mladenov has made, and these include commitments to advance urgent infrastructure and economic development projects to improve access and movement and to support the Egyptian-led reconciliation process.

We stand ready as the United Kingdom to do everything that we can to support these efforts. The people of Gaza are in urgent and they're in desperate need. Yesterday, my government committed to providing a new package of over two million dollars of lifesaving support. The funding will support work by the International Committee of the Red Cross Red Crescent in keeping hospitals open and functioning at a time when the healthcare system in Gaza is under huge strain.

But ultimately Madam President, peace will come only through fresh negotiations between the parties, supported by the international community. Every day makes it more critical that both Israelis and Palestinians return to direct negotiations and urgently prioritise steps to resolve the situation in Gaza. This is the only way that we will be able to achieve a two-state solution: a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. Those who seek to undermine this, including through unjustified acts of violence, deserve the rightful condemnation of this Council, but also the condemnation of the whole world.

Thank you Madam President.