

Speech: UK committed to two-state solution, Jerusalem as shared capital

Thank you Madame President, and thank you Mr Mladenov for that very sobering briefing. I'd like to start by thanking him and his staff for everything they're doing to try and calm down the violence and also echo his tribute to the medical staff on the ground and his appeal for facilitation of evacuation of the wounded.

Madame President, we've seen a concatenation of loss of life, casualties, volume of live fire in Gaza yesterday and this has been shocking and I think appalling to most of us. It is a familiar – depressingly familiar – pattern that we have seen over recent weeks. And it includes the deaths of children. At a highly sensitive time in the region, we call for calm and we call for restraint. A further escalation of violence serves no one's interest. It is only destructive to peace efforts and to wider regional security.

Madame President, we understand that 60 people were killed yesterday in Gaza. Six of them children. Around 2,771 people were reported injured, and that included over 1,300 by live ammunition. The death toll on Monday means that more than 90 Palestinians have been killed in the past six weeks for approaching the fence that has been placed around Gaza.

There is an urgent need, we believe, to establish the facts around yesterday's events, including why such a volume of live fire continues to be deemed justified.

Palestinian right to peaceful protest is undeniable. But at the same time, we are deeply concerned that peaceful protests in Gaza have been exploited by extremist elements. For example, we've seen IDF troops targeted by IEDs, and we've seen the use of Molotov cocktails. This is not acceptable.

The Palestinians have a right to peaceful protest, and Israel has an undeniable right to protect its borders from Hamas and other terrorist groups and threats. The United Kingdom remains strongly supportive of Israel's right to defend itself. We recognize today is a sensitive anniversary for the Palestinians. We implore Israel to act with restraint in accordance with international law, and more than anything, to ensure that its security forces do not resort to the use of excessive force.

Madame President, we understand that 60 people were killed yesterday in Gaza. Six of them children. Around 272,771 were reported injured, and that included over 1,300 by live ammunition. The death toll on Monday means that more than 90 Palestinians have been killed in the past six weeks for approaching the fence that has been placed around Gaza.

The volume of live fire used in Gaza yesterday and the consequent number of deaths is distressing and cannot be ignored by the Council. I want to reiterate the United Kingdom's support for independent and transparent

investigations into the events that have taken place, and in recent weeks, and including the extent to which Israeli security forces' rules of engagement are in line with international law. The death toll alone warrants such a comprehensive inquiry and we continue to urge that the findings of these investigations be made public, and if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible, be held to account.

Madame President, our position on the status of Jerusalem and the move of the American Embassy is well known. Our position is clear and long-standing. The status of Jerusalem should be determined by a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. We need to look forward and we need to work urgently towards a resolution of the long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people.

Like this Council, the United Kingdom is committed to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital and to achieving peace and stability in the wider region. We see negotiations towards a two-state solution as the best way to end the occupation and to meet the national aspirations of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. But now more than ever, Madame President, we need a political process that delivers a two-state solution. We agree with the Envoy that the situation in Gaza is desperate and deteriorating and that the international community must step up its efforts.

To that end, Madame President, I'd like to close by making a request of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process that he and his office bring forward proposals to address the situation in Gaza. These should include easing restrictions on access and movement, and it should include international support for urgent infrastructure and economic development projects. We also reiterate our support for the Egyptian-led reconciliation process and the return of the Palestinian Authority to full administration of the Gaza Strip.

I thank you Madame President.