

# The cycle of violence must end for Israelis and Palestinians alike

Mr President, the ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop.

This week has seen the worst violence Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories have experienced for several years. I repeat my Prime Minister's call that both sides step back from the brink and show restraint. This cycle of violence must end.

The UK offers our deepest condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Each one of those deaths is a tragedy.

Mr President, we are deeply concerned that the current trajectory in Gaza will only lead to further violence and more civilian casualties. We want to see an urgent cessation of hostilities and calm restored. We value the continued UN, Egyptian and Qatari efforts to broker a ceasefire and improve the humanitarian situation. We urge the parties to work with mediators, to cease hostilities and prevent further humanitarian impact.

Let me be unequivocal, Mr President: the UK condemns the firing of rockets at civilian populations. There is no justification for targeting civilians. The death toll seen in the last week is unacceptable, and the images we have all seen are truly harrowing.

We strongly condemn these acts of terrorism from Hamas and other terrorist groups, who must permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel and Israeli civilians.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that Israel makes every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We are gravely concerned by UN reports that medical installations, 23 schools, over 500 houses in Gaza, and buildings housing media organisations have been destroyed or seriously damaged. Israel's actions must be proportionate and in line with International Humanitarian Law. We are also concerned by reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as cover for its operations.

Mr President, we hold this special session of the Council today during the holy days of Eid, and as we approach the Jewish festival of Shavuot.

The UK is clear, Mr President, that violence against peaceful worshippers is unacceptable and must stop. The right to freedom of worship must be upheld.

The historic Status Quo in Jerusalem is important at all times, but especially during religious festivals. We continue to support the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites.

Mr President, let me also reiterate that the UK has made its positions on

evictions, demolitions, and the settlement enterprise clear in this Council, and I will do so again today. We oppose these activities. Settlements are illegal under international law, and an obstacle to peace. We urge the Government of Israel to cease its policies related to settlement expansion immediately, and instead work towards the establishment of a Palestinian state along 1967 lines, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Mr President, the situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to the two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation and bring peace and stability to the region. We urge all sides to show maximum restraint and refrain from taking actions which endanger civilians and make peace more difficult.

These next hours and days are critical, Mr President. The United Kingdom will continue to do all it can to bring an end to this violence and work towards a more peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Thank you.