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## Middle East: UN envoy warns that two-State solution faces impending death

17 October 2002 –

In a sharply worded opinion piece in today's editions of *Al Hayat* and *Ha'aretz*, Terje Roed-Larsen, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, warned that the two-State solution considered fundamental to peace in the region was near death.

"A viable, independent Palestine alongside Israel is still possible, but perhaps not for much longer," writes Mr. Roed-Larsen, blaming the deteriorating security situation "fuelled by vicious terror attacks and widespread violence against civilians," the Palestinian humanitarian crisis, the destruction of the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's expansion of its settlements.

The envoy also points to the "growing chasm" between the efforts to forge a peace accord and the catastrophic situation on the ground. While the Quartet - the United States, European Union, Russian Federation and UN - have reached an unprecedented consensus around a roadmap that would lead to a comprehensive peace, "these promising diplomatic moves clash foursquare with the disastrous situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip today."

Mr. Roed-Larsen casts the debate in terms of "constructionists" favouring a two-State solution and "destructionist" forces opposed to it. On both sides, constructionists say the best way to foster peace, security and prosperity is through the creation of a democratic Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "This State would work for the benefit of its people, and in the process control and stop violence against Israel. In this scenario, both sides win," he says.

In opposition to these forces, Israeli and Palestinian destructionists both seek total control of the land at the expense of their adversaries. "Today's trends," he observes, "show that the destructionists control the day." He warns that a continuation of the current pattern - marked by bloodletting on both sides, the "almost unfathomable" Palestinian humanitarian crisis and Israel's near-total destruction of the Palestinian Authority coupled with expanded settlement activity - would mark the death of the two-State solution.

"To the Israeli people, I ask: are you prepared to ask your government to go back immediately to the negotiating table, to stop all settlement activity and work together with Palestinians and the international community to build a peaceful and viable Palestine? If not, are you prepared to deal with the outcome?" the envoy writes. "To the Palestinian people, I ask: are you prepared to stop not just terror, but all forms of violence, whether you consider them legitimate or not? Do you recognize, as many of your leaders now do, that violence and terror have only served to undermine your national ambitions and create a crisis for your people unmatched for more than two generations?"

Addressing the international community, Mr. Roed-Larsen says the time has come to decisively put the peace process back on track and reach a two-State solution. "Otherwise we must be prepared to address the consequences of its death."