



**United Nations
Secretary-General**

Jerusalem, Israel

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Secretary-General's remarks at Press Encounter with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much for the warm welcome. Ladies and gentlemen, Shalom. I thank Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for welcoming me on such short notice. These are difficult times for Israelis and Palestinians. I am here in the hope that we can work together to end the violence, ease the tensions, and begin to restore a long-term political horizon of peace.

I want to offer, first of all, my sympathy for the loss and injury of innocent victims. Allow me to express my condolences to you and the people of Israel for the killing of your citizens.

I deplore the random attacks against civilians. Such terror attacks make every place unsafe, and every person, regardless of gender or age, a potential victim. Tomorrow, I plan to meet with some of the families of the victims of the recent violence.

I understand the fear and the anger felt by many Israelis in the current environment, as well as the duty that weighs on you, Mr. Prime Minister, to ensure that your citizens can enjoy safety and security.

Clearly, those attacks by individuals are not taking place in a vacuum. Over the past weeks, I have been deeply troubled by statements from Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, praising such heinous attacks. In a recent call with President Abbas, I voiced my deep concern over instances of inflammatory rhetoric and urged all to refrain from it. I have also condemned the arson attack by Palestinian protesters against Joseph's Tomb last week, and I welcome President Abbas' condemnation of that incident.

I urge the Israeli Government to do its utmost to help calm the situation. I welcome the recent statements by you, Mr. Prime Minister, and members of your government and prominent rabbis expressing Israel's commitment to the preservation of the historic status quo at the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. I look forward to discussing with you how to uphold the status quo, in accordance with the agreements between Israel and Jordan and with respect to Jordan's special role as custodian. I urge you, Mr. Prime Minister, to engage with the King of Jordan directly. I am going to see His Majesty, the King of Jordan, on Thursday in Amman.

Mr. Prime Minister, the security challenges your Government is currently facing raise many complicated dilemmas and may require tightening of security measures. However, security measures can be counterproductive if they are applied without special efforts to defuse situations before people lose their lives. If the use of force is not properly calibrated, it may breed the very frustrations and anxieties, from which violence tends to erupt. I urge Israel, as a democratic state, to guard against such incidents and to conduct thorough investigations when necessary.

Israelis and Palestinians stand on the brink of another catastrophic period of violence. We need to keep the situation from escalation into a religious conflict, with potential regional implications. We must create the conditions for meaningful negotiations that will end the occupation and realize the aspirations of both peoples.

The only way to end this conflict is through negotiations that produce visible, meaningful results. Unilateral actions from either side will only perpetuate the downward spiral.

The leaders on both sides, and their peoples, face extremely difficult decisions on the road to peace. No one can take those decisions for them – but neither can the world wait and watch another deadly tragedy unfold.

The generation born after the Oslo Peace Accord expect and want peace. We cannot fail them.

I and my special coordinator on the ground, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, are fully committed to working closely with your government and all the relevant actors regionally and internationally in order to create conditions for meaningful negotiations.

There can be no de-escalation of violence without a re-emergence of hope.

Toda raba (Thank you)!