



United Nations Secretary-General

Ramallah

21 October 2015

Secretary-General remarks at joint press conference with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

Assalaam u alaikum.

Good afternoon.

I thank H.E. President Abbas for welcoming me and sharing his thoughts on the current situation. I have come to Ramallah because I am very concerned about the dangerous escalation in violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel and, especially, in Jerusalem.

Let me first offer my deep condolences to the families who are suffering after so many tragic losses and injuries of their family members. I welcome and encourage the efforts of President Abbas to lower tensions and end the hostilities, which are creating more victims and suffering on a daily basis.

I have been dismayed – as we all should be – by young people taking up weapons and seeking to kill. Violence is not the way.

Violence will not bring a just and lasting peace, but will only push back the day when Palestinians will achieve statehood and both sides will live in peace and security.

I understand the frustration that comes after years of dashed hopes. But the only way to end the violence is through real and visible progress towards a political solution, including an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state living in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

I have stressed to both Israeli and Palestinian leaders the urgent need to reaffirm through words and deeds that they are partners for peace.

They must refrain from unilateral steps that diminish prospects for peace, and make significant improvements on the ground aimed at building the foundations for a two-state solution.

The international community must uphold its long-stated commitment to a comprehensive peace settlement. We will continue to support all efforts to create the conditions to make meaningful negotiations possible.

But ultimately, it is for Palestinians and Israelis to choose peace.

Our most urgent challenge is to stop the current wave of violence and avoid any further loss of life.

I am deeply concerned by repeated provocations at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, which have fuelled the current outbreak of violence. Addressing the existing tensions is critical to reversing the trend towards escalation.

I welcome Israel's repeated assurances that it has no intention of changing the historic status quo at the holy sites. In my meetings yesterday with Israeli officials, I also stressed that it is only through actions on the ground that perceptions will begin to change.

Palestinian and Israeli political, community and religious leaders must stand firm against terror, violence and incitement. The hateful discourse of the past weeks is deeply worrying and must be firmly denounced by all sides.

The response by Israel has also added to the already difficult challenge of restoring calm. I emphasized to Prime Minister Netanyahu the urgency of addressing this issue. Of course, Israelis should not have to live in constant fear of the next attack.

The situation in the West Bank also deserves renewed attention. Settlement activity by Israel is illegal and only inflames tensions, while reinforcing the sense that the viability of the two-state solution is disappearing.

We cannot ignore the sense of desperation that comes with the slow evaporation of hope. We must stop the endless, needless, and mindless cycle of suffering, and begin the hard work necessary to restore the belief that genuine progress towards peace is possible.

A failure to do so will only embolden the advocates of violence and division. I urge Palestinians and Israelis alike to show courage and find their way back to a meaningful peace process.

I welcome renewed international political action, including by the Quartet.

But time is not on the side of peace.

We need to act immediately to prevent any further worsening of an already unsustainable status quo. The United Nations will continue to fully support all efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution.

In that regard, I count on the leadership, political vision, and commitment for peace and stability in this region, where two-state solution will be realized as soon as possible.

And I thank you.

Shukran jazeelan.

Q: [inaudible, in Arabic]

SG: I am very sad as I said. I again express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, and also solidarity and sympathy [with] those people who were injured. I really hope that they will have a speedy recovery, and good health.

As I have said, there is no justification for killing each other. I have been urging both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to tell their people correctly, that there should be no killings.

I know that the people are angry and frustrated, particularly the young people of the Palestinians. When their life has always been under occupation, they do not have much hope. When they want to move this way, there is a roadblock. That way, there is a wall.

And there have been countless times when the promises of the international community or by the political leaders of both sides have been dashed. Then there is anger and frustration.

At the same time, when there is confrontation or violence, I have been urging Israel side to please exercise maximum restraint, maximum restraint. You are a regular army. These are young children. Please use your political wisdom and maximum restraint.