



**United Nations
Secretary-General**

Ramallah,

28 June 2016

Secretary-General's Remarks at Joint Press Conference with the President of the State of Palestine

Your Excellency Mr. President, Mr Prime Minister and Foreign Minister,

Distinguished senior government officials of the State of Palestine,

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,

Assalaam u alaikum. Ramadan Kareem.

Good evening.

It is a great pleasure for me to be in Ramallah again. I thank His Excellency President Abbas and His Excellency Prime Minister Hamdallah for their warm welcome and hospitality.

I was honoured to receive the Grand Cordon-Star of the State of Palestine.

I thank the President and people of Palestine for this great recognition, which I accepted on behalf of all the dedicated women and men of the United Nations working for peace, dignity and social justice here and around the world.

This is my eleventh visit to Palestine as Secretary-General.

I have been with you in times of great difficulties and conflict.

I am aware that many Palestinians question the feasibility of reaching a just and lasting peace with Israel.

They hear talk of peace, but they see violence. They still live a life of checkpoints, permits, blockades, demolitions and profound economic hardship.

Faced with growing indignities and a humiliating occupation that will soon enter its 50th year, many are losing sight of the prospect of an independent Palestinian state. Young people, especially.

Round after round of deadly unrest, the expansion of Israel's illegal settlement enterprise, and nearly a decade of internal division between Gaza and the West Bank have all carried a heavy price.

I have come to the region many times when tensions erupted into escalating violence.

Yet we know that even in superficially quieter times, Palestinians and Israelis are still caught in a vicious cycle.

This evening I had a very moving meeting with the family of Mahmoud Badran, a 15-year-old boy tragically killed last week in an incident that once again raises questions about the appropriate use of force.

Continuing violence, terrorism and incitement are incompatible with advancing a negotiated two-state solution.

I know that President Abbas remains committed to non-violence and I encourage the Palestinian leadership to act effectively particularly against incitement in order to help rebuild trust.

In my meetings with President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, I heard commitments to a negotiated peace.

I reminded both of them that the time for action is long overdue and encouraged them to tangibly demonstrate this commitment and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations.

The two-state solution is the only viable option for sustainable peace in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Earlier today, I visited Gaza. I was profoundly moved once again by the resilience of people in Gaza despite the wars and hardships.

Reconstruction is encouraging, but must be accelerated and scaled-up. I repeat my call on donors to fulfil their commitments.

Long-term stability in Gaza cannot be achieved without two significant developments.

First, reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority, based on PLO principles.

Second, a full lifting of the closures on the Gaza Strip in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1860, while respecting Israel's legitimate security concerns.

I urge leaders in Gaza and the West Bank to deliver to the Palestinian people, at long last, an end to the issues that divide them, and a commitment to strengthening the ties that bind.

And, of course, I once again urge Palestinian and Israeli leaders to engage to bring a just, comprehensive and enduring peace to the people of Israel and Palestine. As a Secretary-General of the United Nations, I commit to working with the leaders and the international community to advance all of these essential goals.

Shukran jazeelan. Thank you.