

Annan, Security Council call on Israel not to expel Arafat

12 September 2003 - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the members of the Security Council called on Israel today not to expel Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, warning that such a move would dangerously exacerbate tension and instability in the region.

“The Secretary-General strongly urges the Israeli Government to reconsider the Security Cabinet’s decision in principle to expel President Yasser Arafat,” said a statement issued by a spokesman for Mr. Annan. “The forcible transfer of President Arafat is dangerous and counterproductive in a situation of tension and instability in the region.

“The Secretary-General notes that the trend of developments on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in recent weeks has been increasingly grim. He urges both sides to live up to their responsibilities under the Quartet’s Road Map and to exercise the utmost restraint and statesmanship,” the statement added.

The Council President for September, Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry of the United Kingdom, said in a press statement that the 15 members “expressed the view that the removal of Mr. Arafat would be unhelpful and should not be implemented.”

He told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York, after the Council had meet behind closed doors to discuss the situation at the request of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab Group of UN Member States, that they also condemned all violence and urged both sides to act with maximum restraint.

The members “recalled the effort of the international community to pursue the Road Map and urged both parties to implement their obligations,” he said, adding that the Council would keep the matter under “most active review” and was scheduled to hear a briefing on Monday by Terje Roed-Larsen, the UN’s Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to be followed by an open debate.

The Road Map is the peace plan drawn up by the so-called diplomatic Quartet - UN, United States, European Union and Russia - calling for Israel and the Palestinians to take a series of parallel and reciprocal steps culminating in the achievement of two states living side by side in peace by 2005.

In Geneva, Mr. Annan told reporters that he was sure the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council, whom he is to meet there tomorrow to discuss Iraq, would also seek to discuss the Israeli move against Mr. Arafat.

“I myself sought at the start to have a meeting of the Quartet and I don’t know if it will be possible tomorrow or not, but in any case I am sure the ministers are going to discuss the Middle East,” he said in French in reply to a question.

Source: United Nations