

Cycle of Middle East violence reducing the option of negotiated peace - Annan

21 October 2003 – The net result of the increasing spiral of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East is that each side is pushed farther and farther from the negotiating table and each doubts whether it has a partner for peace, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said today in a message to a United Nations meeting on Middle East peace.

"Suicide bombings are immoral. They are counter-productive. They must be stopped," Mr. Annan said in a [message](#) delivered on his behalf by Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor to an international media seminar on, "Towards a Two-State Solution," in Seville, Spain.

"Quite apart from the appalling toll in lives, with every new outrage, support by even moderate Israelis for reconciliation is diminished and undermined and the Palestinian cause itself suffers grave harm, even among its most steadfast advocates," he told seminar participants.

On the other side, Mr. Annan said, "Israeli actions, including the reckless use of disproportionate force, the building of a separation fence and the expansion of settlements, meanwhile, serve only to increase the misery of ordinary Palestinians. Crucially, they weaken the Palestinian Authority instead of empowering it so that it can carry out its responsibilities, including cracking down on extremist violence."

The Israeli air strike against Syria earlier this month was a serious escalation in an already tense region and has raised more wide-ranging concerns about the resort to pre-emptive force, Mr. Annan said.

The international community had to continue to put pressure on the parties to exercise maximum self-restraint and implement their commitments in accordance with the Road Map to Middle East peace, he said. That plan was proposed by the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and the Russian Federation.

As the title of the conference indicated, Mr. Annan said, "there is a just and lasting solution available: two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

The 11th annual seminar was organized by the UN Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Regional Autonomous Government of Andalusia. The meetings have been held annually in different countries since the series was launched in 1991.

This seminar brought together over 40 international participants, including present and former policymakers from Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, as well as senior United Nations officials, international experts and media representatives.

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