



**United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,
Nickolay Mladenov's Press Remarks in Gaza**

Gaza, 15 July 2018

Welcome everyone and thank you very much for coming here.

As I'm sure you will all agree, over the last few months the situation in Gaza deteriorated rapidly. This was the combination of three factors:

First is the humanitarian factor. People's life has become more difficult as people have limited money, the economy has collapsed, electricity and water are scarce.

We cannot stand idle when we see 2 million Palestinians in Gaza living in such terrible conditions as they do now.

Second, we have also seen the deterioration of the political situation with the stopping of the reconciliation process.

I remember the enthusiasm here in Gaza in October of last year, when Fatah and Hamas were invited to Cairo to talk about reconciliation. I remember tears in people's eyes that finally the Palestinian division was coming to an end.

We need to do everything in our power to revive the reconciliation process and to restart the talks that would bring Gaza and the West Bank under one government, under one legal system, and establish one legitimate control of all weapons.

You cannot have a Palestinian state without Gaza, and you cannot have a Palestinian state only in Gaza.

Thirdly, apart from the political and humanitarian deterioration we have also seen a very rapid deterioration in the security situation.

I want to begin by expressing deepest condolences to the parents of all the children whose lives have been lost in the past few weeks; to all journalists and to all medical professionals, who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Even one child being killed is too much. Too many children have been killed in the past few weeks.

All these three factors— humanitarian, political and security, are coming together.

Yesterday we were on the brink of war. And it is taken the concerted efforts of everyone to make sure that we step back from confrontation. A confrontation that nobody wants, nobody needs, and a confrontation from which everybody will lose.

For the last decade Palestinians in Gaza have lived through 3 conflicts. Israelis across the fence have lived with a constant threat of rocket attacks for the last decade. This cycle has to stop. It has to end.

I want to begin today by appealing first of all to Palestinians in Gaza. I know the difficult conditions you live in. I know it is very difficult to believe the international community or anyone who comes and tells you that your lives will be improved.

But I appeal to all Palestinians, to all parents of all children in Gaza today to step back and keep the protests peaceful.

I appeal to the Palestinian factions to not provoke incidents at the fence, to stop the firing of rockets and mortars, to stop the incendiary kites and to give peace a chance.

I appeal to Israel, to be very restrained in its responses to the situation in Gaza. I appeal to snipers not to shoot children.

I appeal to everybody to step back from the brink!

But last if not least, I appeal to my colleagues in the international community not to forget the people of Gaza, not to forget the Palestinians who have lived for generations without a state. And to work with us, the United Nations, and with everyone else who is trying to resolve the situation right now. People in Gaza have had enough wars.

The international community has the responsibility to move immediately and live up to the expectations of providing not just assistance to the people in Gaza, but charting a political way forward.

Our allies in this are the Palestinian people in Gaza themselves. Our partners are in the Palestinian government and everybody who wants to see an end to this current escalation. There is only one way forward.

The **first** step is to restore call to end the shelling and to end the firing.

The **second** step is to resolve all humanitarian problems: create jobs, provide electricity, fix the health care system and provide water.

The UN and our partners are working on a specific plan to immediately move on these priorities in coordination with the Palestinian government, and in coordination with all regional and international factors whose support your needs.

But even if we help fix the humanitarian problems of Gaza we will not be doing enough unless we fix the political problems.

That means two things; improving access and moving for the people of Gaza, through Israel, through Egypt, and I welcome the recent efforts by the Egyptian government to keep the Rafah crossing open.

We will continue working with the Israeli authorities to improve access and movement for Gaza and to allow for more imports and exports. Without an economy, another escalation can come very quickly.

The second step is to get back to the reconciliation process. And I take this opportunity to appeal to the leadership of both Hamas and Fatah and all Palestinian factions, to take Egypt's initiatives very seriously.

The only alternative to the efforts to unity among the Palestinian people and factions is fauda (chaos).

The **next step** is for us in the international community to improve our coordination with all parties, to make sure that everybody steps back from the brink today.

We are one step away from another confrontation. Everybody needs to take a step back.

I hope that within the next few days you will see the results of our efforts to contain the situation and to chart a political path forward.

I am not interested in coming up with projects just for the sake of projects in Gaza.

I am not interested in going to donors and asking them to continue funding initiatives here in Gaza only to provide more food and more water to people without a political perspective for the future.

I am interested in building that perspective.

The only realistic perspective today is this: avoid war, fix the humanitarian problems of Gaza, and get back to the reconciliation process.

If we are able to do this, we can achieve a lot. But we need and I hope we will have the full cooperation of all Palestinians and all Israelis who are sick and tired of war and conflict, who want to live in peace, and who want to see their lives not constantly threatened by rockets or air strikes.

I assure you that the UN will not leave Gaza. We will enhance our presence here to be more effective and more efficient in providing support to the Palestinian people.

We continue working very closely with our colleagues in UNRWA, who as you know face very significant financial problems.

But I want to assure you that the leadership of UNRWA is doing everything in its power to address the financial shortfall and to continue providing services to the Palestinians everywhere.

Thank you.