

Secretary-General's Remarks at Press Conference with Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah of the State of Palestine

Ramallah, 29 August 2017

Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister, for your words and for your warm reception here in Ramallah.

I want to express very strongly the total commitment of the United Nations, and my personal total commitment, to do everything for a two-state solution to materialize. I've said several times that there is no plan B to the two-state solution.

A two-state solution that will end the occupation and, with the creation of conditions, also the suffering even to the Palestinian people, is in my opinion the only way to guarantee that peace is established and, at the same time, that two states can live together in security and in mutual recognition, and we do everything we can to work in that direction.

That means, naturally, that it is important to remove the obstacles for that solution to be implemented. We recognize that the settlement activity that, as I've said several times, is illegal under international law, that the settlement activity is an obstacle that needs to be removed in relation to the possibility of two-state solution to be adequately implemented.

Of course, there are more difficulties, more obstacles. It's important to create the conditions for leaders on both sides to appeal for calm, to avoid forms of incitement, for violence to settle down... There are many things that need to be done, but obviously, the settlement activities represent a major obstacle in relation to the implementation of the two-state solution.

It is my deep belief that it is essential to restart a serious and credible political process of negotiation aiming at that objective – the two-state solution – as it is also important to create conditions on the ground to improve the situation of Palestinian populations. But it is also important to recognize that improvements of economic and social nature and mobility on the ground are not a replacement for the two-state solution or for the serious political process of the negotiation. They are just a necessary complement of these negotiations to strengthen its viability and to make sure that there is a peace dividend felt by populations that help enhance also the commitment of populations in relation to peace.

I would also like to say that we remain very concerned with the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are totally committed to support UNRWA's activity as well as the activities of reconstruction that are taking place in Gaza. We will do also everything possible to support the effort that President Abbas is making in order to create conditions for a unified leadership both in West Bank and Gaza, with the dialogue for peace behind it. I want to express also my wishes of the best success in all your efforts to improving the governance, improving the action that you have been undertaking with us, Prime Minister, to the benefit of the people of Palestine.

Question: Mr. Guterres, Mr. Jimmy Morales ordered the expulsion of the UN anti-corruption commissioner in the country, my question, did he ask or at least suggested you to remove him? The second question, are you concerned for his security, is there any plan for his protection? Has he reached Mr. Morales to change his mind? Thank you.

Secretary-General: I would also like to express my total support to the work of the Commissioner. I believe that CICIG [International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala]

has done a very important job in creating conditions for good governance and to fight corruption in Guatemala. I expressed how shocked I was with the order that was given in relation to his departure from the country. There was never a formal request for me to dismiss him, even if the President expressed concerns, but that is irrelevant.

What is relevant is that the order is an order that shocked me and we have been in contact with different authorities in the country in order to make sure that his security is not put into question.

As you know, there was a decision of the Constitutional Court and we hope that this decision will be upheld.

Question: To the Secretary General, you reiterated your commitment to a two-state solution and the issue of settlements being potential bar to that, you are aware of the Prime Minister of Israel last night made comments about being here to stay forever and there will be no another Israeli settlement uprooted from the West Bank, what's your reaction to the content of that message and also its time given you are here talking about two state solution, talking about settlements, and also listening to criticism of what Israel is calling anti-Israel bias at the UN?

Secretary General: I think it is clear that there is a disagreement on that matter. We believe that settlement activity is illegal under international law. We believe it is an obstacle to the two-state solution and so we obviously are in disagreement with what was said.

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