

**UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REMARKS ON
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

28 NOVEMBER 2018

[as delivered]

More than forty years ago, the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people to remind us of our collective, unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine.

Over the decades, this has become one of the most intractable challenges for the international community, and we know only too well the tragic results.

Demolitions, illegal continued settlement expansion and construction, forced evictions and collective punitive measures will not bring peace.

The same goes for violence and incitement, and similarly, unilateral steps will not resolve final status issues or the conflict.

Only constructive negotiations, in good faith, and adhering to the long-established and agreed parameters for a two-State solution, will bring the desired, long-lasting solution.

Containing the situation is not sufficient.

I call on all actors, and first and foremost the leadership of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to take bold steps and restore faith in the promise of Resolution 181, of two states living side-by-side in peace and security, fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, with borders based on the 1967 lines and Jerusalem as the capital of both states – East Jerusalem being the capital of the Palestinian state.

It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

It is the only option for a comprehensive and just peace, and I call on the international community to intensify its engagement and reiterate its commitment to assist Palestinians and Israelis in reaching the two-State solution.

Today, in particular, our hearts are heavy with the suffering of the people in Gaza.

Approximately two million Palestinians remain blocked in increasing poverty and unemployment, with limited access to adequate health, education, water and electricity.

Young people see little prospect of a better future.

I urge Israel to lift restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which also hamper the efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, without jeopardizing legitimate security concerns.

I call on Hamas and other militant groups to halt their military build-up in Gaza, including the indiscriminate launching of rockets and incendiary devices directed at Israel.

The violence during demonstrations at the Gaza fence is a matter of great concern.

Palestinians in Gaza have legitimate grievances and the right to demonstrate peacefully. Hamas and the leaders of the demonstrations have a responsibility to prevent violent actions and provocations.

But for its part, Israel has a responsibility to exercise maximum restraint and to not use lethal force, except as a last resort against imminent threat of death or serious injury.

I am encouraged by the recent reduction of violence in Gaza.

I commend the efforts of the Government of Egypt and key regional and international partners – together with my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process – to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, restore calm and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government in Gaza.

I also salute the work of UNRWA, delivering on its mandate despite unprecedented challenges.

I am grateful to all Member States who have stepped up their support to UNRWA to help uphold the dignity of Palestine refugees until the conflict is resolved as part of a final status agreement.

The United Nations will not waver in its commitment to the Palestinian people.

On this International Day of Solidarity, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people and to building a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

[ENDS]