

21 October 2023, Cairo

## Secretary-General's remarks to Cairo Summit for Peace

Your Excellency President el-Sisi,  
Your Majesties,  
Your Highnesses,  
Excellencies,

We meet in the heart of a region that is reeling in pain and one step from the precipice.

A region where it is impossible not to be rocked to the core by heart-wrenching, soul-searing images of suffering.

Yesterday I went to the Rafah border crossing.

There I saw a paradox -- a humanitarian catastrophe playing out in real time.

On the one hand, I saw hundreds of trucks teeming with food and other essential supplies.

On the other hand, we know that just across the border, there are two million people -- without water, food, fuel, electricity and medicine.

Children, mothers, the elderly, the sick.

Full trucks on one side, empty stomachs on the other.

Those trucks need to move as quickly as possible in a massive, sustained and safe way from Egypt into Gaza.

A 20-truck convoy of the Egyptian Red Crescent is moving today.

And I want to express my deep gratitude to Egypt in this regard.

But the people of Gaza need a commitment for much, much more -- a continuous delivery of aid to Gaza at the scale that is needed.

We are working nonstop with all parties that are relevant to make it happen.

Excellencies,

Let's be clear.

The grievances of the Palestinian people are legitimate and long.

We cannot and must not ignore the wider context for these tragic events: the long-standing conflict and 56 years of occupation with no end in sight.

But nothing can justify the reprehensible assault by Hamas that terrorized Israeli civilians.

And those abhorrent attacks can never justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

International humanitarian law – including the Geneva Conventions – must be upheld.

That includes protecting civilians and not attacking hospitals, schools and UN premises that are currently sheltering half a million people.

Excellencies,

Our near-term goals must be clear:

Immediate, unrestricted and sustained humanitarian aid for besieged civilians in Gaza.

Immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

And immediate and dedicated efforts to prevent the spread of violence which is increasing the risk of spillover.

To advance all these efforts, I appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire now.

Excellencies,

Our sustained collective efforts and resources have never been needed more.

As we focus on ending the bloodshed, we cannot lose sight of the only realistic foundation for a true peace and stability: a two-State solution.

Israelis must see their legitimate needs for security materialized, and Palestinians must see their legitimate aspirations for an independent State realized, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements.

The time has come for action.

Action to end this godawful nightmare.

Action to build a future worthy of the dreams of the children of Palestine, Israel, the region and our world.

Thank you.

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