

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
REMARKS AT PRESS STAKEOUT

New York, 11 March 2024

Good morning.

Today marks the start of the holy month of Ramadan – a period when Muslims around the world celebrate and spread the values of peace, reconciliation and solidarity.

Yet even though Ramadan has begun – the killing, bombing and bloodshed continue in Gaza.

We recently entered the sixth month since the Hamas terror attacks in Israel and the catastrophic Israeli onslaught on Gaza begun.

My strongest appeal today is to honour the spirit of Ramadan by silencing the guns – and removing all obstacles to ensure the delivery of lifesaving aid at the speed and massive scale required.

At the same time – and in the Ramadan spirit of compassion -- I call for the immediate release of all hostages.

The eyes of the world are watching. The eyes of history are watching. We cannot look away.

We must act to avoid more preventable deaths.

We have witnessed month after month of civilian killing and destruction at a level that is unprecedented in all my years as Secretary-General.

Meanwhile, life-saving relief for Palestinians in Gaza is coming in trickles – if it comes at all.

International humanitarian law lies in tatters.

And a threatened Israeli assault on Rafah could plummet the people of Gaza into an even deeper circle of hell.

For months, leaders have appealed for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate release of all hostages.

But the most compelling calls have come from the families of the victims of this war.

I will never forget my meetings with them -- and they have stood at this very podium and addressed you -- united in remarkable courage and unfathomable pain.

Israeli hostage families who shared their torment and anguish – and pleaded for the immediate release of their loved ones.

And Palestinian families who shared heart-wrenching testimonies of family members killed in Israeli bombardments – and pleaded for an immediate ceasefire.

As one of those family members said, “We are not here for condolences. We are not here for apologies. We are here for immediate action.”

Is that too much to ask?

We must hear and heed those voices.

Desperate civilians need action – immediate action.

Today, I also renew my appeal for a Ramadan cessation of hostilities in Sudan.

The fighting there must end for the sake of the Sudanese people who face hunger, horrors and untold hardships.

In Gaza, in Sudan, and beyond, it is time for peace.

I call on political, religious and community leaders everywhere to do everything in their power to make this holy period a time for empathy, action and peace.

Let’s not forget that beyond Ramadan, Christians will soon celebrate Easter and Jews will celebrate Passover in April.

It is time to end the terrible suffering. Now is the time to do it.

Thank you.



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