

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

REMARKS AT INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE 2020 VIRTUAL MEETING

1 December 2020

[as delivered]

At the outset, allow me to reiterate my heartfelt condolences on the passing of our dear friend, Dr. Saeb Erekat. Today is very much about recommitting to the peaceful vision that he worked so hard to realize, and that I myself testified for more than twenty years.

Regrettably, there is a long way to go.

I address you today with a deep sense of worry about the grim realities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the diminishing prospects of resolving the conflict, which has been with the United Nations since its very creation.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the already dire humanitarian and socio-economic situation.

Israel's suspension of plans to annex parts of the West Bank has removed for the time being a critical threat to peace and regional stability.

However, on the ground, the expansion of settlement planning and construction continues, while demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, reached the highest documented rate in four years.

Such actions are contrary to international law and undermine the prospects for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

Acts of violence, the constant threat of escalation in Gaza, movement and access restrictions, incitement, and human rights violations persist, keeping the situation highly volatile.

In Gaza, militants continue to fire indiscriminate rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian population areas in violation of international humanitarian law, which heightens the risk of a new round of hostilities.

Gaza entered the 13th year of Hamas control. On the other hand, tight closures have exacerbated the suffering of the people.

The lifting of the closures in line with Security Council Resolution 1860, and the reunification of Gaza and the occupied West Bank under a single, democratic, national

government, are essential for addressing the needs of the population and restoring faith in a political horizon.

I hope that recent developments will encourage Palestinian and Israeli leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations, with the support of the international community, toward a two-State solution and will create opportunities for regional cooperation. Only a two-State solution that realizes the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis can lead to sustainable peace.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict.

The position of the United Nations is defined by resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly as well as international law and bilateral agreements. The framework capable of realizing the legitimate aspirations of both peoples is one of two States, living side-by-side in peace and security, based on the 1967 borders, and with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.

At the same time, we must support the life-saving work of UNRWA.

I call on Member States to provide the necessary resources for UNRWA to continue delivering its vital services to millions of Palestine refugees. Failure to do so could pose serious risks to stability that the region cannot afford.

On this International Day of Solidarity, let us renew our commitment to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity. Thank you.



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