



General Assembly  
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Agenda item 38:  
Question of Palestine

Statement by H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen  
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Mr. President

It is with deep concern that we have witnessed the vicious cycle of escalating violence and tensions in Israel and Palestine during the past months, with innocent civilians dead and thousands injured.

The efforts to resolving the conflict by establishing two states living side by side in peace and security remains at an impasse. Now, instead, the two peoples live side by side in fear, anger and distress.

This pattern underscores that the current situation is unsustainable, and should remind the parties of the necessity to resolve the conflict on the basis of the two-state solution.

I would like to make the following three observations:

(Check against delivery)

Firstly, we welcome all efforts to promote calm, encourage restraint and prevent actions that further exacerbate tensions, in particular around the holy places in Jerusalem.

The commitment to maintain the status quo at the Holy Esplanade by the major stakeholders is important, but even more so is the implementation of the agreement reached in October.

It is imperative to continue the security coordination between Israelis and Palestinians.

As every other state, Israel has the right to take necessary measures to protect its citizens against violence and unprovoked killings. At the same time, house demolitions should stop immediately both in Jerusalem and at the West Bank. They just feed violence.

Secondly, we call for a return to a credible political process.

While tensions at the holy places in Jerusalem instigated the current crisis, lack of hope for a better political future contributes to increased frustration and anger among the Palestinian youth.

No amount of frustration justifies violence. Still, the crisis cannot be resolved through de-escalation and security measures alone. The current tensions call for immediate and coordinated political steps by both sides.

Israel should stop building new settlements on occupied land and stop expanding existing ones. Such building undermines any political process and turns hope into frustration, anger and rage.

Palestine needs to reform and strengthen its political institutions and governance structures. In particular, the West Bank and Gaza needs reintegrating into one authority that fully respects the parameters of the security agreements between Israel and the PLO.

Thirdly, cooperation between the parties to strengthen the Palestinian economy and the reconstruction of Gaza can pave the way for the political process.

On 30 September Norway chaired the ministerial meeting of the Donors Group, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, in New York. The donors reiterated their continued commitment to

support developing capable and robust Palestinian institutions and a viable economy. Serious measures need to be undertaken in the West Bank, Gaza and Area C. Unresolved issues related to the Paris Protocol need to be resolved without further delay.

While we urge the donors to increase their support, donors cannot be expected to compensate for unresolved economic issues between the two parties. Economic cooperation is no substitute for a political process, but may help building stability and prepare grounds for a political process. Achieving the full potential of a Palestinian state with well-functioning political and governmental institutions, including a sustainable economy, requires a political resolution of the conflict.

The parties hold the keys to resuming talks, but the international community needs to engage and support in a concerted manner that can bring this conflict to a resolution. Business as usual cannot continue.

Thank you, Mr. President.