



Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

7063rd meeting

Tuesday, 19 November 2013, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Liu Jieyi (China)

Members:

Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
Australia	Mr. Quinlan
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
France	Mr. Araud
Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
Morocco	Mr. Laassel
Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungerehe
Togo	Mr. M'Beou
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: When intensive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resumed earlier this year, tensions were to be expected along the way. Nobody predicted that would have been an easy process. Indeed, four months since their resumption, the talks have reached a delicate moment. On the positive side, it appears that the negotiators have been engaging on substance and have gone some way towards narrowing their differences, notwithstanding the great difficulties that peace will entail. But strains have been growing dangerously between the parties, and they can, and must, be overcome.

International engagement, which is critical, remains strong. United States Secretary of State Kerry visited the region again for in-depth discussions with leaders on both sides, following his regular consultations with Arab foreign ministers that took place in Paris last month. Quartet envoys met on 29 October in Jerusalem, in addition to their separate ongoing engagement with the parties. All of them maintained respect for the confidential nature of the talks.

Nevertheless, the process suffered a significant setback with a series of announcements on settlement plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, following the agreed release on 29 October of 26 pre-Oslo prisoners in the second of four tranches. We have been following these critical developments with growing concern, especially the announcement, on 13 November, of plans for the advancement of some 24,000 units, including in E-1, which cannot

be reconciled with the goal of a negotiated two-State solution.

On the same day, Prime Minister Netanyahu instructed the Minister of Housing to reconsider the plans announced on 13 November. Special Coordinator Serry discussed the reconsideration with Israeli chief negotiator Tzipi Livni. We hope that those plans are suspended. The Secretary-General has reiterated the United Nations unequivocal position that settlements are contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace. He expects the Government of Israel to put a full stop to those plans. In protest over those developments, Palestinian negotiators submitted their resignations, now under consideration by President Abbas, who has nevertheless made it clear that that does not constitute a Palestinian departure from talks. Parties should now intensify efforts and refrain from actions that undermine trust and the spirit of the talks.

The situation on the ground remains tense. Israeli security forces carried out some 356 search-and-arrest operations. In one such operation, on 22 October near Ramallah, an Islamic Jihad militant, reportedly involved in the bombing of a bus in Tel Aviv on 21 November 2012, was shot dead. Searches uncovered a weapons cache in Hebron on 8 November, and on 9 November of a Palestinian was arrested carrying pipe bombs near Nablus. A total of 355 Palestinians were arrested, including two Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. A total of 154 Palestinians were injured, including during continued demonstrations against the barrier as well as the commemoration of President Arafat's death on 11 November. Three Palestinian civilians were shot dead, including two in separate incidents on 7 November near Salfit and Bethlehem while allegedly threatening Israeli soldiers at checkpoints, and another during an incursion near Jenin on 31 October, although Israeli forces denied being the source of the fire. We urge that a thorough investigation be conducted into all such cases, and that accountability for any violations of international law be ensured.

Violence between settlers and Palestinians continued on a daily basis throughout the West Bank. Settler attacks resulted in nine Palestinians being injured, including six children, as well as material losses, including over 600 trees and saplings being damaged during the olive-picking season. Palestinian

attacks, including stone and firebomb-throwing, resulted in eight Israeli settlers being injured.

We continue to be deeply concerned by any act of violence and incitement, which we condemn. On 13 November, an Israeli soldier was stabbed to death in the Israeli city of Afula by a 16 year-old Palestinian from the Jenin area. We are also deeply concerned about the fate of a Palestinian man who, a day earlier, was critically injured when he was reportedly attacked in the Old City by two young Israelis who dropped a stone on his head. We reiterate our call on all parties to refrain from violence. The need for calm is all the more important at this critical juncture.

We also remain worried about the continued demolition of unlicensed Palestinian infrastructures. During the reporting period, a total of 27 were demolished, leading to the displacement of 65 Palestinians, including 31 children. The issuing, on 1 November, of demolition orders for 10 apartment buildings in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ras Khamis, if implemented, would result in the displacement of some 1,500 people. We reiterate the importance of Palestinian access to a fair planning and zoning regime.

On 5 November, a 22-year old Palestinian who was under administrative detention died from cancer after having been transferred to an Israeli hospital, where his condition deteriorated in mid-October. As in all cases of prisoners in critical medical condition, we note that access to timely and acceptable health care is a human right. I also recall the Secretary-General's position that persons in administrative detention should either be charged or released.

Turning to Gaza, one year since the understanding for a ceasefire agreement was signed in Cairo, the situation is once again deteriorating, amid renewed violence and worsening economic and humanitarian conditions. On 31 October, Israeli forces conducted an incursion some 200 metres into the Gaza Strip to demolish a recently discovered tunnel into Israel. The operation came under attack by Hamas militants and an explosive device was detonated in the tunnel, injuring five Israeli soldiers. Subsequent shelling by Israel killed four Hamas militants. Additional violence in and around Gaza during that period included the firing of four rockets and four mortar shells from Gaza into Israel. One rocket was intercepted while the other projectiles landed in Israel without causing injuries or

damage. Israel retaliated with five airstrikes into Gaza, which injured two Palestinians, and conducted a total of seven incursions.

The deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the Strip can be seen as a combined energy and construction crisis. Rolling blackouts increased to up to 16 hours per day following the shutdown on 1 November of the Gaza power plant, which was producing 25 per cent of the total power available in Gaza. That has affected the lives of the Gazan population and the functioning of basic services, including health and water facilities. While a stop-gap measure to replenish the on-site reserves for those critical facilities is now being implemented with the assistance of the United Nations, thanks to a donation by the Turkish Government, a longer-term solution to provide Gaza with the required 450 megawatts is now more urgent than ever and requires concerted efforts by all.

On 13 October, Israel suspended the import of all construction materials, including for international projects, following the discovery of a reinforced tunnel dug from Gaza into southern Israel. Virtually all construction projects in Gaza, including for the United Nations, have been suspended, putting thousands of people out of work. During the past several years, the United Nations has implemented a growing package of housing, schools and infrastructure projects with stringent control procedures, agreed to with the Government of Israel, to preserve the integrity of each project and avoid misuse of materials. While we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, we are confident that those procedures remain adequate. We therefore call on Israel to urgently reconsider its decision to temporarily halt the import of construction materials into Gaza.

The financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has become more serious despite efforts to streamline services and mobilize additional resources. Unless the \$36-million deficit is bridged before the end of the year, UNRWA will be unable to adequately fund its core services, especially in education, health and poverty mitigation, and to pay December salaries of its 30,000 teachers, medical personnel and social workers. We strongly appeal to all donors to step up their contributions to support Palestinian refugees and help prevent an already dire situation from worsening.

As the Council will be briefed next week on Lebanon and resolution 1701 (2006), I will keep my remarks on Lebanon brief. Lebanon witnessed a further devastating attack today in the Bir Hassan neighbourhood of Beirut, apparently targeting the Iranian embassy. Initial reports indicate that at least 23 people, including one Iranian diplomat, were killed. Over 140 people were injured. The appalling attack has been widely condemned by Lebanese politicians across the political spectrum. The Secretary-General has issued a statement condemning this terrorist attack, and extends his condolences to the families of those killed, to the Government of Lebanon and to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Turning to the political situation in Lebanon, eight months have passed since Prime Minister Mikati resigned, but there is still no progress on forming a new Government. Meanwhile, the caretaker Government continued to work with the World Bank and the United Nations on a national stabilization response of the Syrian crisis to the impact on Lebanon of the Syrian crisis, and on the creation of a multi-donor trust fund for Lebanon, as envisaged by the International Support Group for Lebanon.

As of 18 November, 1,500 families fleeing fighting in the Al-Qalamoun region of Syria are reported to have crossed the Lebanese border to the town of Aarsal in the Bekaa valley. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in coordination with other United Nations agencies and partners and the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, is assessing the situation and providing assistance. Earlier, on 14 November, there were reports of two separate violations of Lebanese airspace by Syrian military helicopters, which fired at least four missiles towards Aarsal. In a statement, President Sleiman stressed the need to “protect civilians and Lebanese villages and prevent the recurrence of such attacks”.

In Tripoli, calm was restored, but tensions remain high since fighting began on 21 October, resulting in six fatalities. Additional suspects have been arrested, both for the 23 August bombings in Tripoli and in connection with the firing of rockets earlier this year on the southern suburbs of Beirut and towards the presidential palace in Baabda. Credible reports suggest that Hizbullah fighters continue to support Syrian Government forces in battles in Syria, in clear violation of Lebanon’s disassociation policy.

There were no major incidents in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon area of operations

and along the Blue Line, although Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace continued on an almost daily basis.

In Syria, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict, with warring parties failing in their responsibilities to offer protection. Already, half of the country’s population is in need of assistance and displaced from their homes. Palestinian refugees also remain trapped in the conflict. UNRWA is particularly concerned about the situation of civilians in Yarmouk and other Palestinian refugee camps. The Agency managed some days ago to deliver some food to several dozen refugees in Yarmouk when an upsurge in conflict required the operation to withdraw. UNRWA is standing by until an arrangement can be made with the parties to the conflict to access the camps.

More fighting will bring nothing but further suffering and despair to the Syrian people. It is past time to move to a political process. The Secretary-General and the Joint Special Representative for Syria continue to work hard to bring the Syrian sides to the negotiating table to jointly agree on how to fully implement the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex) in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013) of 27 September. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation for the hospitality and generosity of Syria’s neighbours towards refugees from Syria, in spite of their own growing socioeconomic challenges.

Let me also reiterate the Secretary-General’s call for the flow of arms and foreign fighters to Syria to be halted, as well as his commitment to delivering humanitarian assistance to all in need in Syria and in neighbouring countries. The Secretary-General will convene the second donor conference in Kuwait on 15 January 2014, and we hope that all will show generosity in supporting our humanitarian work.

In conclusion, let me return to the status of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The risks they face are apparent to all of us, yet a two-State solution remains the only way to fully realize the legitimate aspirations of both peoples to self-determination, peace and security. The consequences of failure would be dire for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We thus continue to urge the parties to remain steadfast in their commitment to seeing this process through, but we fear that unless steps are taken to prevent the recurrence of negative developments, such as those of recent weeks,

the remaining chances to achieve a negotiated two-State solution may be irreparably damaged

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Feltmann for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.