



Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

7084th meeting

Monday, 16 December 2013, 3.10 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Araud (France)

Members:

Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
Australia	Mr. Quinlan
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
Morocco	Mr. Laassel
Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon
Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungerehe
Togo	Mr. M'Beou
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, 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. Serry.

Mr. Serry: We have previously spoken of 2013 as a decisive year for the peace process, a year that would be pivotal for salvaging a two-State solution, a year that would decide whether the Palestinians — already accorded non-Member observer State status by the General Assembly — could realize their aspirations to statehood, self-determination and an end to the occupation that began in 1967 through a negotiated solution, the only solution that would also bring Israel the security and recognition in the region that it deserves. And we spoke of it as a year that would test the commitment of the international community to re-engaging and breaking the deadlock in this conflict, in the face of competing priorities in the region and elsewhere. We also warned that the consequences of inaction could be dire for everyone, putting an already precarious situation on the ground at risk even further.

And it has certainly been an important year, in which we have finally witnessed the renewal of direct talks, brokered by the United States and now in their fifth month. Spurred by the unwavering personal involvement of Secretary of State Kerry, leaders on both sides have taken courageous steps, despite domestic headwinds and public scepticism. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have engaged quietly in some 20 rounds, and neither side is ready to give up or walk out of the talks. The Quartet envoys continued to consult with each other and engage with the parties, as well as with Arab partners. The European Union, in its Council conclusions issued today, expressed its full support for the efforts of the parties and of the

United States towards a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It offered

“[a]n unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to both parties in the context of a final status agreement.”

All of this testifies to the ongoing international and regional support for the process.

The parties are approaching another important timeline in the negotiations, the third release of prisoners, scheduled for 29 December. We urge both sides to refrain from steps that would increase mistrust and undermine the prospects for progress in the critical period ahead when bolder decisions are required to bridge the gaps towards a final status agreement. There is good reason to be concerned about the fragile situation on the ground. Indeed, the current environment is far from conducive. Continued settlement activity cannot be reconciled with the goal of a two-State solution and is illegal under international law. The United Nations is also concerned about recurrent violence and incitement.

During the reporting period, Israeli security forces carried out some 217 search-and-arrest operations. A total of 352 Palestinians were arrested and 206 injured, including during demonstrations against the barrier. Six Israeli soldiers were also injured. Six Palestinians were killed, including when on 26 November Israeli security forces shot dead three allegedly Al-Qaida-affiliated Salafist extremists near Hebron, who were reportedly carrying explosives and weapons and planning lethal attacks on Palestinian and Israeli targets. One Palestinian was shot dead on 30 November while in Israel without a valid permit, and another died on 28 November of injuries sustained at Qalandiya checkpoint in March.

In a troubling incident on 7 December, a 14-year-old Palestinian was shot in the back by Israeli security forces and died in Jalazun refugee camp, next to the Israeli settlement of Beit El, allegedly after throwing stones at Israeli forces. This shooting follows a recent series of serious injuries to Palestinians from live fire and rubber-coated metal bullets directed by Israeli security forces at or near the camp. We urge the Israeli authorities to reach a speedy conclusion to their inquiry into the circumstances of this fatal incident, and to act with maximum restraint and avoid the use of excessive force.

Palestinian security forces, working to maintain law and order in the West Bank, carried out major security

operations in Jenin and Nablus, which included the arrest on 1 December of more than 20 alleged Salafist extremists. Violence between Palestinians and settlers continued. Settler attacks injured eight Palestinians, including four children. So-called price-tag attacks by settlers on Palestinian property included several incidents of racist graffiti and vandalism in the West Bank. Palestinian stone-throwing attacks, on the rise in recent months, injured four settlers, including two children. Demolitions of unlicensed Palestinian structures in Area C and East Jerusalem have been increasing. A total of 74 structures, including more than 30 in the Jordan Valley last week, were demolished, leading to the displacement of 98 Palestinians, including 55 children.

The United Nations has repeatedly called for a halt to demolitions and for Palestinian access to a fair planning regime that meets their residential and development needs. Three Palestinian administrative detainees, on hunger strike since 16 November in protest at their detention, have been transferred to hospital in Israel due to deterioration in their health. We reiterate that people in administrative detention should either be charged or released.

Turning now to Gaza, as reported previously, thanks to a generous Turkish contribution a safety net is in place to allow the most critical water, sanitation and health-related facilities to continue operating. However, Gaza's deficient infrastructure was not able to cope with the impact of the current inclement weather. While the West Bank was also affected, heavy flooding in many parts of the Gaza Strip has resulted in the displacement of approximately 10,000 people. The United Nations is actively engaged with relevant parties in addressing the most urgent issues. Shelter, flood-water removal equipment and non-food items, particularly fuel, are being provided to those in need with the support of the United Nations humanitarian system on the ground. While Israel was hit by the same inclement weather conditions, it responded to an urgent request to provide four water pumps for Gaza. With the Erez crossing flooded and temporarily inoperable, Israeli authorities have expanded the operations and opening hours of the only other crossings, at Kerem Shalom. We hope that the Rafah crossing will also resume normal operations as soon as possible in order to help address the difficult humanitarian situation.

As the Council is aware, we have been expressing our deep concern about the critical energy situation

in Gaza, especially since the Gaza power plant ceased operations on 1 November. I have been working closely with the Palestinian Authority and other relevant parties to address the issue. I am pleased to report that the Government of Qatar has come forward with a donation of \$10 million for the Palestinian Authority to purchase fuel for the plant. In addition, a Qatari shipment of 18,000 metric tons of fuel is expected to reach an Israeli port in due course. The Israeli authorities have confirmed their cooperation in transferring 450,000 litres of fuel per day through the Kerem Shalom crossing. As a result, the Gaza power plant resumed operations as of yesterday. That is an important but by no means sufficient development in order for Gaza's structural energy problems to start being addressed.

I am pleased to note the decision of the Government of Israel to resume the transfer of construction materials for United Nations projects in Gaza, under an agreed-on mechanism for the materials' secure transfer and use. Work has now resumed on critical construction projects — part of the half-billion-dollar package the United Nations is implementing in the Strip — such as schools, social housing and water and sanitation facilities. While we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, it remains important that Israel also reinstates its September decision to begin allowing imports of construction materials for the private sector. The United Nations remains ready, with other Quartet partners, to help to define agreed modalities for the secure transfer and use of such materials.

During the past month, the security situation in and around Gaza has witnessed relative calm. One rocket and four mortar shells fired from Gaza landed in Israel, and Israel conducted one incursion and four airstrikes, none of which caused casualties or damage. Six Palestinian civilians were injured by Israeli live fire near the border and three were arrested. Since in the past year the lowest level of violence and civilian casualties in 13 years has been registered in Gaza and southern Israel, the continued preservation of the ceasefire understanding of a year ago will provide a basis for progress on other issues as well, including further opening of the crossings.

Turning to Syria, the Council was briefed earlier today by the Secretary-General on the use of chemical weapons. Yet the vast majority of the killings and destruction continues to be carried out with conventional weapons. As they try to settle their scores by military means, the warring parties continue

to disregard their legal and moral responsibilities to protect the civilian population. With almost half of the population displaced and in need of urgent assistance, the humanitarian tragedy is worsening every day, particularly with the onset of winter.

Since the United Nations is now working very hard to prepare for a "Geneva II" conference on 22 January, we should also be seeing steps from the Syrian parties and the international community aimed at helping the conference succeed. All the Syrian parties must work now to achieve a cessation of violence, humanitarian access, the release of detainees and the return of refugees and internally displaced people to their homes. All those with influence on the Syrian sides should help them prepare for constructive engagement in Geneva and for taking immediate confidence-building measures.

In the Golan, the situation remains volatile. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations will brief the Council later this afternoon on the details.

Turning to Lebanon, there was a serious incident yesterday with the shooting of an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier by a Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) soldier in the vicinity of Naqoura. The Secretary-General deplored the incident and called for calm. The IDF and the Lebanese Armed Forces are cooperating with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to ascertain the facts. Both reaffirmed their commitment to working through the established liaison and coordination arrangements with UNIFIL so as to ensure that this remains an isolated incident, and reaffirmed their commitment to the cessation of hostilities under resolution 1701 (2006). The Secretary-General commends both sides for exercising restraint.

The security situation has been tense since the terrorist attack against the Iranian Embassy last month. On 4 December, a senior Hizbullah commander was assassinated in Beirut. On 22 and 29 November, the Lebanese army defused a car bomb in the Bekaa and another in Zahle. Separately, there have been reports of further deaths of Hizbullah militants fighting in Syria, in violation of the Lebanese Government's policy of disassociation. By 3 December, some 40,000 refugees had crossed the border into Aarsal, fleeing fighting in the Syrian region of Al-Qalamoun.

On 30 November, a fresh round of fighting in Tripoli between Sunni and Alawite neighbourhoods led to 14 fatalities, including two children, as well as one soldier of the Lebanese Armed Forces, which were heavily deployed. On 2 December, the city's security was placed under the responsibility of the army for six months, with the support of the Internal Security Forces. The situation is currently calm.

There have also been incidents of concern in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain el-Hilweh, where clashes led to two fatalities on 1 and 3 December. In the southern city of Sidon, two LAF checkpoints were attacked yesterday, resulting in the death of one soldier and four of the assailants.

Meanwhile, the political situation remains deadlocked. The Council has urged all parties in Lebanon to engage constructively to facilitate the formation of a Government as soon as possible. It is vital that all parties assume their responsibility in that regard so as to address effectively the acute security and humanitarian challenges facing the country. Serious commitment is also required to holding presidential elections on time in 2014, before the end of President Sleiman's term.

Let me conclude. As this year comes to a close, the parties are engaged in a serious effort to implement their commitments to a negotiated two-State solution. We sincerely hope that this effort will lead next year to decisive and irreversible progress towards a comprehensive settlement realizing the vision of two States for two peoples — Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition of each other's legitimate rights, including self-determination, with each State ensuring equal civil rights for all its citizens. If both parties, with the continued effective support of the international community, take the bold steps needed to see through what they have started this year, we in 2014 will reach a moment of truth regarding a two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.