



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Gréta Gunnarsdóttir
Permanent Representative

The situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question

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Mr. President,

In the case of Syria, Iceland welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2165 with the aim to ensure access of humanitarian assistance to people in need throughout Syria. We commend the non-permanent members, Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg, who relentlessly worked towards building a consensus around the resolution which was long overdue.

But humanitarian assistance can only give short term relief and much more needs to be done by the Security Council to seek a political solution to the conflict. The situation is already having significant consequences on regional peace and security, affecting the situation in neighbouring countries as well as the UN's own peacekeeping mission on the Syrian Golan. The Council can not sit idle by.

In Syria we have also been witnessing flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law for over three years now, especially by the Syrian Government. We continue to condemn those violations and reiterate our call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC.

Mr. President,

On the Israeli/Palestinian conflict I want to start by expressing Iceland's condemnation of the violations of international humanitarian law by both sides in the conflict. We condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas and other militant organizations in Gaza against civilian targets in Israel - terrorizing the civilian population and which have so far resulted in 2 civilian deaths - We also condemn the use of force by the IDF which has resulted in more than 600 deaths in Gaza, the vast majority of them civilians, and the injury of more than 3500 people as well as immense destruction of homes and other civilian infrastructure. The IDF's air and ground assault raises concerns about respect for the principle of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attacks under international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

While the current situation in Gaza is beyond tragic I am not going to dwell on it. Because the core problem is not what is happening today. The core problem is the occupation.

It is the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that affects all aspects of the daily life of Palestinians, that violates their human rights, including their freedom of movement and property rights, right to assembly and freedom of expression, the right to education, right to health, equal access to justice and due process.

In this respect, let's recall that this month it is 10 years since the advisory opinion of the ICJ where the Court clearly stated that the wall, where built on occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, is illegal according to international law. But contrary to the recommendations of the Court, not much has changed on the ground. The wall continues to obstruct the movement of Palestinians and severely impact their livelihood opportunities. Let's also recall that this summer the blockade on Gaza has been in place for 8 years with dire consequences for the civilian population.

Mr. President,

We spend a lot of time at the UN discussing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the importance of dialogue and mediation for peace and security etc. These concepts are not meant to be abstract. They do not exist in vacuum. The whole idea is to apply them to real life situations.

Accordingly we commend the Secretary General for going to Israel and the State of Palestine to try directly to seek a ceasefire. We strongly encourage him to continue being personally engaged and make full use of his good offices to find a durable solution to the conflict.

The conflict also requires urgent attention by the Security Council. First and foremost a ceasefire must be brokered which will not only provide for laying down arms but also lay the ground for achieving something more durable.

Secondly, the Security Council needs to firmly uphold its responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. Every effort must be made to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict resulting in two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The parameters are fairly clear and well known to all. The Council can start by demanding respect for its own numerous resolutions on the conflict and for international humanitarian law.

Thank you, Mr. President,