



**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam  
Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations**

**at the  
Security Council**

**The Situation in the Middle East,  
including the Palestinian question**

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*Check Against Delivery*

Mr. President,

Let us first admit that the main facts pertaining to the Middle East conflict are all increasingly alarming and that the situation has been deteriorating in an unprecedented way. Suffice it here to recall the following:

With 2,314 Palestinian and 87 Israeli killed, 2014 witnessed the highest civilian death toll since 1967 due to the July-August hostilities in Gaza, and a significant increase in Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank.

In 2014, Gaza also witnessed the highest rate of internal displacement since 1967. 28% of the population were internally displaced at the height of the hostilities. True that since the ceasefire was announced on 26 August, the majority of IDPs returned home, but shelter needs remain enormous as up to 18,000 families have no more homes to return to.

Also in 2014, the number of people displaced in the West Bank and East Jerusalem due to the demolition of homes and property, was the highest recorded in a single year since OCHA began tracking this indicator in 2008.

Moreover, in 2014, the Israeli government set a 10 year record for the number of tenders issued for settlement construction in the West Bank including East Jerusalem; and construction starts increased in 2014 by 40% over the previous year.

And how not to mention that 2014 witnessed the collapse of the US sponsored peace efforts mainly due to Israel's political intransigence, let alone its refusal to honor its commitment to release Palestinian prisoners and its aggressive policy of expanding settlements.

Mr. President,

Worse was to come in 2015, however, with the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, saying loud and clear during his electoral campaign that if he were to be reelected, a Palestinian state would not be established "on his watch". Moreover, he vowed to increase settlement construction in East Jerusalem by adding "thousands of housing units". And on Election Day, he warned in a notorious racist statement against Arab citizens of Israel voting "in droves".

Naftali Bennett, the Minister of Economy in Netanyahu's government was in turn loud and clear on rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian State by saying that "the notion of injecting a state, dividing Jerusalem, dividing up the country and slicing it, is not sustainable"; and in the same racist vein as Netanyahu, he also suggested in one of his infamous speeches that Arabs were simply "thieves".

And let us not forget that for Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's Foreign Minister, the solution to "disloyal" Israeli Arabs was simple: "To pick up an axe" and behead them!

Mr. President,

The situation in our part of the world is indeed becoming more and more difficult. But this is no excuse for inaction. On the contrary, the more difficult a conflict situation becomes, the greater the responsibility of this Council.

As a matter of fact, to be meaningful now, any resumption of negotiations on the Middle East conflict ought to be based on well defined parameters. Also needed for the success of such negotiations is a new comprehensive international framework as well as clear and agreed upon deadlines. Accordingly, this Council is called upon to shoulder its responsibilities in the maintenance of peace and security by addressing these critical issues sooner than later.

Mr. President,

Don't let the situation deteriorate any further. Time is for action ...