



Statement

by

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to the United Nations**

**at the
Security Council**

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

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Mme President,

Allow me to start by thanking you for organizing this timely meeting, and I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his comprehensive briefing and efforts in addressing the situation in the Middle East.

Mme President,

Three months ago, Israel launched its third military campaign of “collective punishment” on the 1,800,000 people of the Gaza Strip in less than six years. In July and August, Israel’s air force launched more than 6,000 attacks, and its army and navy fired about 50,000 artillery and tank shells, killing over 2,100 Palestinians and wounding more than 11,000. The majority of these casualties were defenseless civilians, and it is estimated that over half of them were children, women, disabled, and old people. Over 450,000 inhabitants of Gaza were forced to leave their homes. 277 schools, 17 hospitals and clinics, and over 40,000 other buildings have been damaged.

All those who stood against this Israeli savage assault against Gaza, and its dreadful means of indiscriminate killing and wanton destruction of homes and property, deserve to be commended indeed. Let me still add that it was particularly heartening to see published in the *New York Times* of August 23rd a letter, in which 327 signatories from 26 countries representing four generations of survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Holocaust stated: “As Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi genocide we unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine ... Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.”

Realizing the enormity of the destruction, the International Community pledged \$5.4 billion at the Cairo conference for the reconstruction of Gaza. Its generosity is also to be commended. No less important however is the fact that all participants at the Cairo conference stressed the inevitable need to address the root causes of the conflict. Secretary General Ban Ki moon summarized this by stating: “It is time to chart a course to a just and final peace between Israelis and Palestinians – one that addresses all the outstanding issues.”

More than twenty year after Oslo, and two years after the renewed efforts by the US Secretary of State Mr. John Kerry to re-launch the peace process, it is heart wrenching to witness not only the drastic humanitarian situation in Gaza but how this body which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security can still stand idle before the continued and repeated violations by Israel of its obligations under international law from the rampant illegal settlement activities and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes, to the provocation and incitement by Israeli soldiers and settlers, in particular at the Haram Al- Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem.

Let the lessons from Gaza spark a new beginning of the peace process to put a clear end to the Israeli occupation, help the State of Palestine achieve its full independence, and ensure meanwhile international protection to its people. In this context, we highly praise the decision by the Government of Sweden to recognize the State of Palestine, as well as the motion in the UK parliament to that effect.

Mme President,

Time and again, my government reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 and called on the international community to compel Israel to abide by its obligations under said resolution, to withdraw from the remaining Lebanese occupied territories and to put an end to its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty by land, air and sea. Today, we would like to renew this call and to underline that it is only by reinforcing its capacities that the Lebanese Army will be able to fulfill its tasks in cooperation with UNIFIL in the south of Lebanon, and will be able to combat terrorism and maintain security and stability in the whole country. The events in Aarsal are but the latest chapter in the fight of the Lebanese army against terrorism. In this regard, my delegation highly values the continued support expressed for the army in particular during the meetings of the International Support Group for Lebanon in Paris, Rome and here in New York on the margins of the GA.

Mme President,

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the flow of refugees into Lebanon continues unabated. UNHCR staff in Lebanon registers an average of 2,500 new refugees every day. Indeed, with more than 1,145,000 refugees now registered, the impacts are affecting all aspects of life in my country. For example, the number of student refugees is expected to exceed 140,000 this year, amounting to 57% of public school students in Lebanon.

Clearly, the stability of my country is being threatened by the fallouts of the Syrian conflict. And the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was right indeed when he stated that "Preserving Lebanon's stability is everybody's business". Burden sharing is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of our collective endeavors to address the dire humanitarian situation of Syrian refugees and their host communities. In this context, and on the eve of the Berlin conference on Syrian refugees let me underline how important it is to include a greater number of those refugees currently in Lebanon into any resettlement programs.

Finally, the dire humanitarian situation of Syrians whether displaced in their own country or now refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey should be enough in itself for the international community to redouble its efforts to help reach a political settlement to the Syrian crisis.

Thank you.