



Statement

by

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**at the
Security Council**

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

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Check Against Delivery

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Mr. President,

Allow me to start by commending the excellent work done by your delegation during the presidency of the Council this month, and through you, I would like to express deep appreciation to the mission of Malaysia for a job well done in the previous month. I would also like to thank Mr. Mladenov for his sobering briefing.

The Middle East faces new challenges but it remains tormented by the Israeli occupation.

One year ago, Israel unleashed its military operation against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. 51 days of continued Israeli raids, killings, massive destruction, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of Force. The words of an Israeli soldier from the report "That is how we fought in Gaza," said it all: *"By the time we got out of there, the place looked like a sandbox"*. That is what they did to the people while maintaining their blockade on Gaza.

Today the situation there continues to deteriorate. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that: *"Not one of the 12,620 totally destroyed units was reconstructed"*, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) stated that *"880,000 Palestine refugees rely on quarterly food assistance"* and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sounded the alarm when it declared that *"unemployment rate reached 46%."*

Makarim Wibisono, the Special Rapporteur on Human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories, captured the essence of the Israeli practices in the West Bank and East Jerusalem when he said: *"Occupation policies constrain Palestinian life and push Palestinians to leave their land and homes, especially in area C of the West Bank, and East Jerusalem."*

Suffice to mention that in 2014, the Government of Israel demolished 493 Palestinian structures in Area C, and it threatens today to demolish Sussia village near Hebron. And the same Government authorized in the first quarter of 2015 the continued construction of settlements in the West Bank with a 219% spike in completed housing and a 93% rise in starts. Typical approach by Israel not to miss an opportunity to negate the two-state solution by stalling the process and seizing the land.

Mr. President,

In the midst of this desolation, the historic agreement between the Vatican and the State of Palestine is a ray of hope. It should summon the moral audacity of the international community to finally break the political stalemate and to translate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people into realities. Indeed, the Security Council should do much more to establish a new credible and comprehensive framework for negotiations to be conducted in a defined timeframe and based on the well-known parameters set by relevant UN resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194, the Madrid principles and the Arab peace initiative.

Mr. President,

In the course of this month, the total number of Syrian refugees has exceeded 4 million, *"the biggest refugee population from a single conflict in a generation"* according to the High commissioner for refugees Antonio Guterres. Over 1.2 million of those refugees fled to my country and are registered with UNHCR. The situation of those refugees and their host communities remain extremely challenging. In this context, my government continues to work relentlessly with the international community; the latest endeavor was the adoption of the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). Yet, it is alarming that only 21% of this plan has been funded.

Time and again, we have reiterated that it is imperative to counter those refugees' despair by widening the humanitarian space, based on the principle of shared responsibility, and by intensifying resettlement programs. Those refugees and their host communities should not be forgotten or left alone.

Mr. President,

This month coincides with the commemoration of many atrocities around the world, 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, 9th anniversary of the Israeli war on Lebanon which ended with the adoption of resolution 1701, and the first anniversary of the latest Israeli war on Gaza. For all the victims, women, children and elderly, our message and actions should be "Never again."

Thank you Mr. President.

