

Urgent action needed to avoid war, alleviate suffering in Gaza – UN envoy tells Security Council

Gaza is on the verge of collapse and its people becoming increasingly desperate, a United Nations envoy told the Security Council Wednesday, urging international action to avoid another war, alleviate suffering and empower more responsible government within the enclave.

“In this Chamber, Council members have often spoken of the need to prevent war; and the Secretary-General has put preventive diplomacy at the heart of his agenda. It is time for our words to be tested in Gaza,” Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Council by video teleconference from Jerusalem.

He reiterated his call for the Council to condemn “in the strongest possible terms” the actions that have cost so many lives in Gaza, especially the deaths and injuries caused by live-fire from Israeli forces along the border fence.

With at least 60 protesters of all ages confirmed dead from the violence of 14 May, “the number continues to climb” he said, and he cited UN figures reporting 76 Palestinians killed by Israel Defence Forces during the past month, and more than 3,000 injured.

He said Israel had a responsibility to not use lethal force “except as a last resort” and “investigate every incident that has led to a loss of human life”.

Mr. Mladenov also told the Council that the militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, “must not use the protests as cover to place bombs and the fence and create provocations.”

The Special Coordinator welcomed Egypt’s move to open the border crossing at Rafah throughout the month of Ramadan and hoped that the security situation would allow regular movement.

He also acknowledged Israel’s recent efforts to ensure the delivery of goods to Gaza, despite the serious damage done at the Kerem Shalom crossing by protesters in recent weeks.

*It is time for our words to be tested in Gaza Nickolay Mladenov,
Special Coordinator*

Turning to the humanitarian situation, the UN envoy pointed out that Gaza’s

electricity, water networks and health system “teeters on the verge of total collapse”.

He detailed four proposals to address the situation, namely prioritizing agreed-upon infrastructure projects via an established liaison committee; the adoption of fast-track approach to speed up implementation; coordinate with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Egypt to overcome blockages; and the upholding of the 2014 ceasefire.

The UN envoy explained that these would strengthen “the unification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority in line with the Quartet Principles; and an end to the occupation and resolution of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

Recent developments

Meanwhile he noted the first meeting of the Palestinian National Council on 30 April, the first in 22 years and Palestine’s accession to the UN Nations Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)), the UN Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)) and the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#).

Concerning the decision by some countries – including the United States – to relocate their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Mr. Mladenov said: “Given its importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims, Jerusalem is a highly sensitive and charged issue for millions,” and “upholding the status quo at the Holy Sites remains critical for peace and stability.”

He reiterated the UN’s position that “Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.”

In closing, the Special Coordinator said that the office of the Middle East Quartet – established by the UN, the European Union, the United States, and Russia – remained a key forum for resolving the conflict, including within the broader regional context.

“We must continue to work together,” he stated, adding that there was no alternative other than on the basis of two States, “for achieving a peaceful future for all the people of this troubled land.”