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SG/SM/17353-OBV/1556-PAL/2198

24 NOVEMBER 2015

Amid Heightened Tensions, Secretary-General Urges Greater Efforts to Break Impasse towards Achieving Two-State Solution, in Message for Palestinian Solidarity Day

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, observed on 29 November:

This year's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People falls at a time when security and hope are at a low point.

A wave of violence has included heinous attacks, stabbings, shootings and vehicular attacks causing immense suffering among Israeli and Palestinian families alike. I condemn such attacks and all acts of violence. Illegal settlement activities and settler-related violence have continued, along with punitive demolitions of Palestinian-owned homes and structures.

The tensions related to the Holy Sites in the Old City of Jerusalem have introduced a troubling and dangerous religious dimension to the conflict. During my visit to the region last month, I stressed the need to preserve the status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, in line with the agreements between Israel and Jordan and with respect to the special role of His Majesty the King of Jordan, as Custodian. I welcome Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the status quo; this commitment needs to be accompanied by actions to defuse the situation and restore confidence.

It is crucial that leaders on both sides play a constructive role towards resolving the conflict. Both sides must reject incitement and inflammatory public statements.

Recognizing the security challenges Israel faces, I nonetheless remind Israeli authorities that the use of force, if not properly calibrated, feeds anger and frustration. I urge Israeli security services to exercise maximum restraint, particularly in the use of lethal force.

Palestinians feel deep frustration over an occupation that has lasted nearly 50 years. Israelis fear deeply for their security. The lack of a political horizon to achieve the two-State solution risks allowing the situation to spiral out of control.

The international community can and must play a greater role to break the impasse. The Middle East Quartet continues its efforts to preserve the viability of a Palestinian State and establish conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations.

On 29 November 2012, the State of Palestine joined the United Nations as a "non-member observer State". Today, 136 countries recognize the State of Palestine and its flag flies at the United Nations next to those of all Member States. However, these advances are not felt by children in Gaza, or by the residents of Nablus, Hebron and East Jerusalem. What they feel instead is a lack of hope that their lives will change for the better and that they will be citizens of a State able to ensure their freedom and well-being through peace with their neighbours.

On this International Day of Solidarity, let us reaffirm our commitment to bring about the just peace that the peoples of Israel and Palestine deserve.

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