



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  
to the United Nations**

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**Statement**

by

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Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  
to the United Nations

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

United Nations Security Council  
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First of all, let me thank Mr. Mladenov for his informative briefing.

On behalf of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of the late Dr. Saeb Erekat, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Secretary-General and Chief Negotiator for Palestinians in the Middle East Peace Process. Dr. Erekat will be remembered for his great contributions and tireless efforts in defending the just Palestinian cause, and in this regard, we also offer our solidarity to President Abbas and the people of Palestine as they mourn this great loss.

Amidst this sombre moment, we are reminded of the human costs of COVID-19. While we grapple with the ever growing social, economic and political costs of the pandemic, we must spare no effort in saving lives. To this end, we are concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation across the West Bank and Gaza Strip where continued instability creates the fertile ground for increased transmission of this deadly virus. We are however heartened by the recent announcement of the Palestinian Authority to resume security and civil coordination with Israel. This is indeed a positive step, and we encourage further cooperation between the two parties to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

Excellencies,

Despite repeated international calls for a cessation of all settlement activities, Israel continues to methodically plan, tender, build new settlements, and expand existing ones. Most recently, it has been reported by the group “Peace Now” that the Israel Land Authority announced that it had opened up tenders for more than 1,200 new structures in the settlement of Givat Hamatos. The construction and expansion of settlements are not only grave violations of international law and numerous relevant resolutions adopted by this Council, including resolution 2334 (2016) and the

General Assembly, but also a direct violation of Article 49 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. These settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem remain a serious obstruction to peace, and we therefore call on Israel to cease their construction and to dismantle existing ones.

Moreover, we remain deeply concerned about political, physical and socio-economic division of Gaza and the West Bank, which remains another major obstacle to advancing the prospects for peace. My delegation reiterates today the call to Israel to lift the Gaza blockade.

To achieve peace and security there is no better alternative than dialogue. For this reason, we reiterate President Abbas' call for an international conference in 2021 under the auspices of the U.N. and the "Middle East Quartet". We urge the relevant parties to make every effort to convene this timely international conference.

Turning to the needs of the Palestinian refugees, *many of whom are located in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. At this critical time when the needs of Palestinian refugees are increasing, UNRWA needs international support to address the financial shortfall faced by the Agency. We urge donor states to fill the large funding gap in providing additional funding to the Agency's budget.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the need for this Council to speak with one voice on matters concerning Palestine and to move decisively towards a just and durable solution which will allow the Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, to live side by side and in peace and security with Israel.