



**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 St. Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations

At the

**VTC Briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian
question**

United Nations Security Council

27 May 2021
New York

Thank you, Mr. President. I thank Special Coordinator, *Tor Wennesland* for his briefing and mediation efforts. I also thank UNRWA Commissioner-General, *Philippe Lazzarini* for his briefing and we have taken note of your four recommendations. We greatly appreciate the enlightened perspective of *Dr Rashid Khalidi, Professor of Arab Studies* of Columbia University.

And we thank the representatives of the State of Palestine and the State of Israel for their statements.

All briefings were essentially about loss and despair and an urgent call for new thinking and a changed approach. Mr President, the briefings do come at a particularly acute time for the consideration of the situation in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza, where oppression and settler colonialism continue. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines followed with great concern and consternation the spike of violence in Gaza since 10 May leading to more than 250 deaths; more than 1900 wounded, the majority of whom are civilians, including women, children, and the elderly; and more than 75,000 displaced persons, all of which has been compounded by the destruction of civilian infrastructure — houses, schools and hospitals.

As we mourn the loss of lives of both Palestinians and Israelis, we welcome the announcement of an unconditional ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, brokered under Egyptian auspices. We also commend the regional countries, including Qatar, the United Nations, the Middle East Quartet, and others for their mediation efforts. It is our hope that the parties will exercise maximum restraint and ensure that the ceasefire represents a full and complete end to violence.

Moreover, we welcome the Council's adoption last week of press statement SC/14527, on the ceasefire. That outcome reflects the extent of the Council's determination to alleviate the human suffering in Gaza despite the political obstacles that have hampered the Council's ability to act decisively to prevent the crisis.

We condemn the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, wounding dozens of worshippers and arresting six Palestinians. We repeat the call that the status quo at the Holy Sites must be upheld and respected. Israeli aggression, particularly the attacks and storming of extremist settlers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque must end immediately.

Our absolute priority today is to restore calm and immediately halt the suffering of Palestinian civilians on the ground, particularly in Gaza. The international community must take a closer look at the far-reaching human suffering and dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. In this connection, we call for the opening of all crossings into Gaza, and urge the international community to provide rapid humanitarian aid to those people and respond to UNRWA's flash appeal for \$38 million to address the most pressing humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. We must do all we can to alleviate their suffering. Furthermore, the 14-year blockade draining life from Gaza must be lifted as an imperative.

In closing, we reiterate that a two-State solution remains the only way to achieve a lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. The international community needs to find a way to help the Israelis and the Palestinians return to negotiations on the two-State solution. The absence of a political dialogue runs the serious risk of further deterioration in security conditions in the future.

Thank you!