



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

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Statement

by

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to the United Nations

At the

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

Security Council Chamber

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New York

Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to thank the Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his comprehensive briefing.

A resolution to the matter before us this morning is long overdue. The suffering of Palestinians and the injustice meted out for decades is etched in the hearts and minds of many people. Recently, we saw football fans display their solidarity with the just Palestinian cause at the Arab Cup held in Qatar. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to stand in solidarity with the State of Palestine, in support of international law and mindful that the world is watching and losing faith in this Security Council and our rules-based international order for failing to uphold the very rules that we adopt.

We have repeatedly reaffirmed the vision of a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, with Palestinians and Israelis living peacefully side-by-side. This is a vision backed by international law, resolution 2334 and numerous other resolutions of this Security Council and the General Assembly. We emphasise, again, the need for Israel to end its aggression, occupation, and annexation. The lack of progress towards the two-state solution is, quite frankly, egregious.

We need to address the following issues with urgency: the escalation of hostilities in the West Bank and Gaza, forced displacement through home demolitions, undue restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, extrajudicial killings of Palestinians, settler violence, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Palestinians, and the situation of Palestinian refugees. In an effort to address these issues, we appeal to the Israeli authorities to respect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

This month (23 December) marks five years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Since then, the situation on the ground has only deteriorated, due to Israel's non-compliance with its obligations. Yet again, we reiterate that the establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. Furthermore, the continued demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures is also deeply concerning and we condemn these acts. These practices must stop. It is time for this Council to take practical steps towards ending the occupation and realizing a negotiated two-State solution.

We remain very concerned about the very fragile situation in Gaza. Now, more than ever, humanitarian, and economic support is needed to support the most vulnerable communities in Gaza. As we are aware, the 14-year siege on Gaza continues to devastate its economy, restrict the movement of people, and limit the provision of basic services, including electricity, affecting medical services and hospital operations. We reiterate our call on the Israeli authorities to lift the years-long blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, to allow for the reconstruction of Gaza in its entirety.

The plight of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East is dire. The financial situation of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees' (UNRWA's) is worsening, with December salaries for UNRWA staff, most of whom are Palestinian refugees themselves, hanging in the balance and refugees facing stark reduction in services. We commend donors who are committed to supporting UNRWA and call for timely and predictable funding to allow the Agency to conduct its vital work.

Further, we remain deeply concerned about the Israeli designation of 6 civil society groups doing critical work for Palestinians, as terrorist groups.

We take note of the recent virtual meeting between the United States and Palestinian Authority to discuss economic matters. This engagement must be grounded in international law and support the two-state solution. We welcome all engagements to this end.

As this is the final statement my delegation will make as an elected member of the Security Council, I wish to commend you, Ambassador Abarry, for the manner in which you and your team, with the assistance of the Security Council Affairs Division have led the Council this month. For our part, it has been an honour and a privilege for my team and I to work with everyone, on both professional and personal levels during our two-year tenure.

I thank you, Mr. President.