

## **Statement**

**By**

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Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations**

**At the**

**Security Open Meeting on**

**The Situation in the Middle East including  
The Question of Palestine**

**20 August 2001**

Mr President,

I join other delegations in thanking you for organizing this Open Meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation in the Middle East including the Question of Palestine.

My delegation remains deeply concerned over the escalating violence in the Middle East which has exacted a high toll of casualties and deaths mostly among Palestinian civilians. For almost a year now, violence has continued to ravage the occupied Palestinian territories and it is becoming more intense. The increasing violence not only shatters the confidence in the peace process, but also compromises the sacrifice, time and energy invested so far in the quest for peace and security in the region. The extra-judicial killings of Palestinians by the Israeli forces are proceeding at a dangerously accelerated rate. This practice is unacceptable and must be condemned. The situation on the ground has today become alarming and explosive. Hundreds of innocent victims - including children and women from both the Palestinian and Israeli sides - continue to suffer because of the apparent inability and failure by the international community to take the necessary steps to stem the violence. The death toll only continues to rise day after day. Loss of life in any situation is tragic but when loss of life is avoidable it becomes immoral.

Mr President,

Prospects for a durable peace in the Middle East have seriously been jeopardized by recent events. If appropriate steps are not taken promptly, there is a high risk that the entire Middle East will be embroiled in a full scale war. No one wishes this to happen. We at the Security Council need to assume our responsibilities. Several Security Council resolutions continue to remain

unimplemented and peace in the Middle East still remains elusive. Today, the eyes of the international community are once more focused on the Security Council which under the UN Charter has the responsibility to intervene and stop the situation from deteriorating any further. The Council has no option but to remain actively engaged and undertake the necessary action to contain the ongoing violence, encourage confidence-building measures between the two parties so that the peace talks may resume.

My delegation urges Israel to put an end to all acts of violence and targeted assassinations. Mauritius strongly condemns the excessive and indiscriminate use of force and violence against the Palestinian people. We also strongly condemn the Israeli occupation of Orient House in East Jerusalem and the closure of other buildings belonging to the Palestinian Authority. Orient House is a symbol of peace and the dignity of the Palestinian people. Its occupation by Israel is unacceptable. These unwarranted Israeli acts which are flagrant violations of past agreements signed by the two sides, would further undermine prospects for reviving the peace process and constitute a deliberate act of provocation. Unless such practices are immediately put to an end, there will be a further radicalization of the Palestinians. All acts of provocation should stop. We join our voice to the call made by the Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, for Israel to immediately end its occupation of Orient House and other Palestinian buildings. Both Israel and Palestine should exercise the highest degree of restraint and act responsibly in order not to exacerbate the situation even further.

Mr President,

In the West Bank and Gaza strip, the blockades imposed by Israel have only further worsened the sufferings of the Palestinian people and resulted in untold daily hardship to the residents in the Palestine-controlled areas. The blockade has cost the Palestinian economy millions of dollars; unemployment has soared, and hundreds of thousand of people are struggling for their survival. It goes without saying that unemployment, misery and frustration are the breeding

grounds for more violent actions. We call upon Israel to immediately remove all the blockades so that the Palestinian people may resume their normal activities.

Mr President,

My delegation is reminded of the remarks made seven years ago by the late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr Yitzhak Rabin that Israelis and Palestinians are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. The establishment of an independent State of Palestine along with the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) are the only safeguards for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and in the Middle East region. Israel too has the right to exist within secured borders.

Since November last year, the NAM Caucus of the Security Council has relentlessly undertaken efforts to move the Council to establish a UN Observer Force to provide protection to the Palestinian people. We are convinced that had the Council agreed to the deployment of such an

Observer Force, we would not have come to such a situation.

Mr President,

Over the past twenty-three years several milestones have been reached in the protracted peace process. Beginning with the Camp David Accords in 1978, we have moved to the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Peace Agreements, the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings of October 2000. Each time we have expressed hopes, confidence and expectations that peace will finally be within reach. But each time there has been disappointment. Now we have the Mitchell Report, which provides a viable process for a peaceful settlement. We cannot afford to lose this opportunity.

The acceptance of the Mitchell Report four months ago by both sides created expectations which unfortunately have not been realized. Time has been lost but no more time should be lost. The Report offers a sensible and coherent foundation for resolving the crisis and resuming meaningful negotiations.

Mr President,

Mauritius believes that both sides should look forward and promptly consider adopting the confidence-building measures recommended by the Mitchell Report. We appeal both to the Palestinian Authority and to the Israeli Government to put an end to the cycle of violence and return to the negotiating table. In this regard, we wish to commend all the efforts undertaken so far by the Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, to narrow down the differences between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. We encourage the Secretary-General and the leaders of the region as well as the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation to pursue their efforts to break the deadlock.

We also endorse the statement made by the G8 in Genoa, Italy, which reaffirmed that the implementation of the Mitchell Report was the way forward to break the deadlock, stop the escalation of violence and resume the political process. It is clear that in such an impasse, the international community should provide all possible assistance and avenues to the two sides to stop the violence and resume the peace talks.

Mr President,

My delegation supports the idea of creating a monitoring mechanism that would help the two parties implement the Mitchell Report. This is the only way for us to ensure that the recommendations of the report are respected and implemented. My delegation would support such an initiative when the matter will be considered by the Council and we call upon all members to give serious consideration to this course of action.

Thank you, Mr President