



Resumed 10th Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the "Illegal Israeli Actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

**Statement by Her Excellency Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett
Permanent Representative of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the
United Nations in New York**

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General Assembly Hall

Madam President,

The Government of Guyana supports the convening of this Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly in light of the deeply distressing levels of violence and hostility unfolding in the Middle East, particularly in the Gaza Strip, since 7th October. The targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure and the resulting casualties and injuries, the mass displacement of persons and the concomitant challenges of such movements, are worrying to say the least. The strike on the al-Ahli Hospital was nothing short of an illegal act of savagery that should never happen in any civilized society. The evacuation order to those in the Al-Quds Hospital must also be seen in the same way. Guyana expresses heartfelt condolences to those who lost loved ones in these tragic and undignified circumstances, and we pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. We also commiserate with the relatives and friends of UN staff members who were killed in the conflict. We commend the UN staff who continue to serve in these extreme circumstances.

Madam President,

Twenty-four days ago, the world woke to the shocking news of an infiltration of Israeli territory by Hamas, rocket attacks on the country, and the killing and abduction of Israeli citizens. We condemn these events in the strongest possible terms and underscore that they were violations of international law.

Since that attack, we have witnessed a military response by Israel unprecedented in scale and impact, and one which has created a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the densely populated Gaza Strip. To compound the problem, the Gaza Strip was under complete siege for the next thirteen days following the attack. There was no way out and nothing could get in. Electricity, water, fuel and food supplies were cut off. And 1.1 million people were ordered to undertake a massive evacuation exercise from the north to the south of the country. We are all aware of the abyss to which the people of Gaza have been driven on account of these developments, even as war continues.

Hapless civilians continue to bear the brunt of these attacks. We were disheartened to hear the assessment that no place is safe in Gaza since hospitals, schools, and other buildings that should be safe spaces in accordance with international humanitarian law were also struck in indiscriminate strikes.

Guyana emphasizes the responsibility of parties to the conflict to fully and unconditionally respect and uphold the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law. Even wars have rules, and the principles of distinction, proportionality, humanity, and necessity must be upheld. The protection of civilians is paramount, and we call for an immediate end to the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Moreover, Guyana calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages, and for the immediate release of all Palestinian civilians unjustly held. We demand their safety, well-being and humane treatment in compliance with international law.

Madam President,

The creation of a humanitarian corridor into Gaza is now an existential question and Guyana was pleased to learn that the first aid convoy entered Gaza on 21 October after thirteen days of a complete siege. But this is not near enough. Before 7 October, at least 500 aid trucks entered Gaza daily. Today, it is a fraction of that. We call on those with influence on the relevant parties to exert all of it, so that there is unhindered and continued flow of life saving aid to the people of Gaza. A comprehensive ceasefire is crucial to the sustainability of the humanitarian intervention in Gaza. Guyana implores the parties to immediately cease the fighting and to choose the path of dialogue and peace.

We also underscore the importance of avoiding further escalations of the violence to the West Bank and other parts of the region. We urge maximum restraint by all parties to this end.

Madam President, Excellencies

True and principled leadership can never involve overseeing the killing of women and children. Shockingly, we have learnt that more than 3,500 children have been killed in Gaza over these last 24 days - more than all those killed in conflicts in the world annually since 2019. Children whose childhood joys had already been curtailed, living in the constant shadow of war and displacement. Children who, already versed in the sounds of war, could tell when hellish artillery was approaching, and not only since October 7th. Children who nevertheless dreamt, perhaps believed, that this world, this United Nations, would ensure that they and their families live in their own country, in their own state, in peace and security.

But even as we mourn these little ones cut down before they could truly experience what it means to live in peace, we see their surviving brothers and sisters being denied food, water and other basic necessities. And the hospitals to which the battered and maimed turn for a chance at life, are denied fuel.

Madam President, Excellencies,

The international community has failed these children and many, many more before them; it has failed the people of Palestine for more than 50 years.

Guyana underscores the special responsibility of the Security Council to act in light of the threat that this situation poses to the maintenance of international peace and security. The current paralysis of the Council on this matter is therefore deeply concerning. We implore the Council to send a strong and clear message to the people of Israel and Palestine, and the entire region, that the rule of law will be upheld.

In this context, Guyana was encouraged that this General Assembly did not falter when called upon to stand up for principles, justice and the rule of law.

We were among those who supported the resolution adopted last Friday and we reiterate the provisions of that resolution. We call upon the concerned parties to adhere to those provisions as they are morally obligated to do.

Madam President,

Let me underscore the importance of the responsibility and involvement of us all - the international community - in finding a solution. In the words of Guyanese poet Martin Carter:

"... like a web is spun in pattern, all are involved, all are consumed."

The United Nations has a moral obligation to the people of Palestine and Israel to reinvigorate the peace process. It is the only way to guarantee the exercise of the inalienable right to self-determination by the Palestinian people and to address the security concerns of Israel. The Palestinian people continue to be pushed further behind, with their aspirations for development and peace strangled by cycle after cycle of violence and oppression for over seven decades. The urgent realization of the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders is critical.

The Government of Guyana is unwavering in its commitment to this objective and is ready to contribute constructively to any genuine effort to this end.

I thank you.