

Pakistan Mission to UN

Statement by Ambassador Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, in the open debate of the Security Council on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question" (18 April 2016)

Thank you Mr. President,

We also thank the Secretary General for his briefing this morning.

Today, more than ever, the Middle East is a cauldron of conflict. War and suffering have steadily spread from their epicenter – the Palestinian-Israeli dispute in the Holy Land.

The prospects for peace between Israel and the Palestinians are abysmal.

The current Israeli leadership is fast closing the possibility for a two state solution, formally accepted by the Parties and the international community. It is doing this willfully by its policy of expanding settlements, demolitions and incitement, accompanied by the refusal to engage in a meaningful dialogue to implement the internationally agreed two state solutions.

Violence by the occupation forces against Palestinian children, women and other innocent Palestinians continues. Illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem increased by 250 per cent during the first 3 months of this year as compared to last year.

A report of the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process last week rightly acknowledged, “The viability of a two-state solution is in danger”. There is an ever present danger of another Intifada if a credible peace process is not revived rapidly.

Unless the Israeli Government agrees to resume the implementation of the two state solution, and halts and reverses its policy of expanding settlements, the UN Security Council must, in accordance with its mandate and its own resolutions, adopt a concrete and legally binding plan to implement the two state solutions and take the necessary measures for its enforcement.

A two-state solution was promised by the international community to the Palestinian people. This promise must be kept. An independent, contiguous and viable state of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is and must remain our objective.

Pakistan, for its part, remains committed to supporting the Palestinians in their decades-long legitimate struggle for their rights and for dignity. The President of Pakistan reaffirmed this commitment when he met President Abbas at the Extra Ordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jakarta last month.

Mr. President,

It will be difficult to resolve the other crises which have proliferated in the Middle East or to eliminate the rise of terrorism and extremism unless the world finds a just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Meanwhile what was termed as the "Arab Spring" has turned into a winter of despair and suffering. The scale of the suffering in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere is unprecedented in its scope and intensity.

As we discuss solutions here today, people continue to endure unimaginable suffering, and their exodus has created a humanitarian catastrophe.

There is urgent need for statesmanship, diplomacy and dialogue. Political and ideological polarization in the region has exacerbated the consequences of external intervention, intensified sectarian and ethnic divisions and rendered political solutions more difficult.

The unity displayed by the international community in combating ISIS is a critical first step. But these efforts will be successful only when the world addresses the underlying reasons for the appeal of its toxic ideology to so many young and impressionable people in so many countries.

Mr. President,

Syria recently marked the fifth anniversary of its fratricidal conflict. Every succeeding year has been worse than the one before. The Syrian people continue to suffer unimaginable hardships. Atrocities are being committed by all sides.

We all agree that there is no military solution to this conflict. It is therefore critical that the fragile cessation of hostilities is maintained and the proximity talks in Geneva, reconvened last week, at least chart a way towards a negotiated settlement.

We support the efforts of UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and hope all sides will accord primacy to the interests of the Syrian people in evolving a durable political solution to this vicious conflict in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

There are positive signals emerging from Yemen as well- a truce was agreed last week and although the direct face-to-face dialogue that was to be initiated in Kuwait earlier today, has encountered a difficulty we hope this will be temporary. We note with hope the statement of Special Envoy Ismail

Ould Cheikh Ahmed in this Council last week that: “we have never been as close as we are today to peace”.

Mr. President,

It will not be easy to restore peace and stability in the Middle East. Beyond the diplomacy, and a genuine commitment by all powers and parties to negotiated solutions, a comprehensive and enlightened policy is needed to address and overcome the underlying political, economic and social causes of these conflicts.

Pakistan remains ready to make its contribution to the construction of a new and peaceful order in the Middle East.