The Permanent Mission of Iceland

to the United Nations

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Gréta Gunnarsdóttir
Permanent Representative

Question of Palestine [item 36]

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Mr. President

The Security Council has in recent weeks received a number of letters from the Israeli and Palestinian sides highlighting acts of aggression and provocation. The situation seems to be spinning out of control. Unless leaders on both sides show the necessary courage, restraint and firmness forthwith, the consequences for each community and the region will be dire.

Mr. President

Four Israeli civilians were killed and a number injured in an attack by four men wielding knives and pistols last week in a West Jerusalem synagogue. About a week before that an IDF soldier was stabbed as was a young Israeli woman. Use of cars as instruments of terror has increased and several Israeli civilians, including one baby, have been killed in such attacks.

According to OCHA 47 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the beginning of the year. Palestinian injured in clashes with Israeli security forces in the West Bank are in the thousands. There have been 543 demolitions over the year including reintroduction of punitive demolitions, in contravention of international law. There are increasing and violent multiple raids in East Jerusalem and the West Bank by the IDF, and attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and Palestinian property continue.

Mr. President

Facts on the ground, as they have been developing for some time now, are steadily eating away at the perspective of a two-state solution. Hope is being eroded. Palestinians on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem see their human rights flouted, their property seized and destroyed, their children arrested or injured. Gaza remains blockaded, with an extremely serious humanitarian situation and no prospect of becoming a normal economy and part of the Palestinian State. At the same time, Israel feels threatened and many Israelis live in fear of violence.

Iceland recognized the State of Palestine in 2011. This modest signal, added to that of many other member states of the UN, encompasses the vision of a State based on the 1967 borders, and where Israel and Palestine can live side by side in peace and security.

In the current circumstances the leaders of both sides need to take measures to stop retaliation and violence – restraint is difficult and needs strong leadership. Now is the time for leaders to engage with each other. Provocation and retaliation will continue the downward spiral.