

Human Rights Council – 27th session

General Debate, Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Statement by Ireland

22 September 2014

Ireland thanks the High Commissioner for his report submitted to the Council at this session, and commends in particular the valued work of the OHCHR field presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is reflected in the report. The evidence of the report, and the violent events of recent weeks, show that this situation remains a matter of proper concern to the Human Rights Council.

Ireland stresses that all human rights violations, by any party, should be open to scrutiny in this debate and in the Human Rights Council more generally.

Ireland reiterates the right of all peoples in the region, including Israelis, Palestinians and others, to live in peace and security and enjoy full respect for their rights and freedoms. The rights of one people do not negate the rights of others.

The massive violence in Gaza continued for a further month after we discussed it in Special Session here on 23 July. When it ended on 26 August the final death toll was over 2,100 dead in Gaza, and 11,000 injured. Over 70 Israelis, mostly IDF personnel, also lost their lives. The great majority of those killed in Gaza were civilians – men, women and children caught up in a conflict from which they were not able to flee.

Ireland condemns the firing of rockets by Hamas and other groups including Islamic Jihad at civilian targets in Israel, which remains a serious and unacceptable threat to life.

We also condemn the use of massive and disproportionate military force by Israel against targets in Gaza, including attacks on UN schools and facilities. These are utterly unacceptable. Whatever efforts may have been made to avoid civilian casualties, the facts show plainly that these efforts did not work, and that the attacks were continued despite the clear evidence of massive casualties.

As I said in July, it is clear that neither side was paying due regard to the cost of their actions on innocent civilians.

The fighting has ended for now, but the conditions in Gaza remain unacceptable and are likely to promote further militancy and despair if unaddressed. If the responsible parties on both sides do not work now to reach a solution which involves the opening of the borders of Gaza to ordinary traffic, and an end to attacks on each other, then they will bear a heavy responsibility for the inevitable continuation of the cycle of violence.

Ireland also remains deeply concerned about the continued construction by Israel of settlements in Palestinian territory, and the related policies of dispossession, eviction, construction of the separation wall on occupied land, and the extensive restrictions on movement by Palestinians in their own territory. These are unjust, provocative and deeply damaging to efforts to reach peace.