



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



**Security Council Briefing on the situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian Question
25 February 2025**

Greece's Remarks delivered by H.E. Georgios Gerapetritis,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece

[as delivered]

Thank you Mr. President,
Esteemed colleagues,

It's a unique opportunity for the council members to exchange views on a very critical issue and at critical times. And I would like to thank our briefers, Ms. Kaag and Mr. Levy for their briefings, but above all Noa Argamani for her shocking and alarming personal testimony.

Following decades of war and instability, the Middle East currently stands *indeed* at a turning point.

The ceasefire agreements in Lebanon and Gaza demonstrate that peace may indeed be attainable. During my recent tour in the region, I had a close-up experience of that new momentum.

The recent, long-awaited ceasefire and hostage release agreement in Gaza is a great example of this momentum; and a reminder for all of us of what can be achieved through political will.

After all, peace, like war, can succeed only where there is a will to enforce it.

Political will is truly the key to finally overcoming the harsh reality of war and in this spirit, I commend the persistent mediating efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States which continue to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire deal.

It is now key to proceed to an agreement on all phases of this deal so as to ensure the release of all hostages and a permanent end of hostilities which will allow planning for a more prosperous and secure day after for the whole region.

Harrowing stories like Noa's or Shiri Bibas' will echo for years. They remind us how urgent is to immediately release all hostages and to make sure that what Noa described a few minutes ago never happens again. It reminds also that we need the ceasefire to hold and the conflict to end permanently.

On the humanitarian front, the situation on the ground apparently remains alarming. Millions are in urgent need of primary health services, education and shelter. Hence, the unhindered and continuous flow of aid into all parts of Gaza should remain a priority.

In this regard, we welcome the increase in the delivery of humanitarian aid following the ceasefire agreement, the re-opening of the Rafah Border Crossing and the reactivation of the “EUBAM Rafah” Mission in which Greece is pledging to participate.

Mr. President,

Greece is present in all efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people in Gaza. We have already welcomed and we will continue welcoming injured children from Gaza for treatment to Greek hospitals. We also continue to send humanitarian aid to support Palestinian families and through the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem the Monastery of St. Porfyrios in Gaza has proven a safe haven of a big number of fellow human beings both Christians and Muslims.

We cannot change the past. But we can start laying the foundations for the future. Post-conflict planning, including governance, security and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, are also essential. The Palestinians should have a leading role in this process. *Displacement of people would lead to instability in the whole region.* The International Community should continue assisting the Palestinian Authority, helping it address its immediate financial needs and implementing necessary reforms to promote good governance, strong institutions and to ensure de-radicalisation.

The ceasefire agreement gives a much-needed impetus for the revitalization of the political process; the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of a two-state solution according to the relevant Security Council Resolutions, while recognizing the right of Israel to exist in peace and security. Sustainable peace is necessary to defeat extremist and radical forces in the whole region.

Esteemed colleagues,

With the Muslim holy month of Ramadan imminent, followed by Easter which this year will be celebrated on the same day for all Christian denominations, we are reminded of the importance of the special Status Quo of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Taking into consideration the universal importance of the Holy Sites I wish to re-affirm Greece’s deep interest in the preservation of the Status Quo.

Mr. President,

Please allow me a few comments on the broader region concerning the current situation. New hope is emerging from Lebanon.

Greece warmly welcomes the formation of a new government in Lebanon, following the election of President Aoun and the appointment of Prime Minister Salam.

The cessation of hostilities has also been a most welcome development, and we congratulate the US and France on their contribution. Ensuring the long-term security of both Israeli and Lebanese citizens is the only path towards sustainable peace. The Lebanese Armed Forces, being gradually deployed south of the Litani River and securing the safe return of the displaced to their homes, are playing a very important role in the implementation of the provisions of the ceasefire agreement and of the UNSC Res. 1701.

Greece as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, will be actively engaged in the discussions for the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate in 2025, while participating for a long time in the naval part of the mission with a frigate.

When it comes to Syria, security and prosperity in Syria are of acute importance for regional stability in the whole Middle East. Therefore, safeguarding the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, is a shared aspiration and a shared goal.

I recently visited Damascus, where I had a comprehensive discussion with interim President al-Sharaa and Foreign Minister Shaibani. I also participated in the Ministerial Meeting on Syria, held in Paris. My message has been clear and consistent in all my engagements: we support a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition, in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. This process should include all ethnic and religious communities as well as Syrian Political forces. It should also pave the way to a constitutional reform and fair elections with a view to a democratic, representative, inclusive and non-sectarian government with no foreign interference.

As the international community rushes to address Syria's needs after 14 years of Civil War, so must Syria demonstrate its good will and fully respect its neighbors' sovereign rights in accordance with international law, including the International Law of the Sea.

In my opinion, the process of returning to normalcy goes through four pillars: Gradual lifting of sanctions; institution building; reconstruction; and the return of Syrians to their homes.

Esteemed colleagues,

Let me just brief you on now turn to regional maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea—both under extreme pressure, as the danger of prolonged insecurity due to

Houthi attacks still looms. Maritime security is a declared priority for our tenure at the Security Council.

As a maritime nation and a leading force in the EU naval Operation ‘ASPIDES’, Greece will contribute to upholding respect for maritime security, freedom of navigation and protection of seafarers, in full compliance with international law.

Against this backdrop, and working closely with our partners, we call for a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement in Yemen, under the auspices of the UN; the only pathway towards lasting regional peace and stability.

Mr. President,

As the region is undergoing profound changes, we must seize any positive momentum and spare no effort through this Organization, its bodies and Agencies to help it shape in the form of more justice, dignity and peace for all peoples in the Middle East.