



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Security Council High – level open debate on the Middle East

23 July 2025

Greece's Statement delivered
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Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary General Mr. Khaled Khiari, for his detailed and insightful briefing.

Mr. President,

A lot has transpired in the volatile region of the Middle East since our last Open Debate in April; demonstrating the potential pitfalls in a part of the world where security can unravel in an instant.

The recent cessation of hostilities between **Iran and Israel** has been a welcome development. It is now critical for IAEA inspectors to resume their activity, verifying the status of Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles and enrichment capabilities. We urge Tehran to abide by the JCPoA, return to the negotiations table and uphold its commitments as part of the NPT.

Volatility in the Red Sea region, a nodal maritime route, exposes the international community to acute security risks and economic uncertainty, jeopardizing global trade and supply chains. Underscoring the importance of immediately ceasing all attacks against merchant ships, we reiterate our call for the full respect and implementation of the UN arms embargo against the Houthis by all.

The core of regional tensions and turbulence, lies where it all started on October 7th, 2023, with the horrendous terrorist attack of Hamas on Israel. As discussed a week ago in this very Chamber -for yet another time- a year and half into this conflict, a severe humanitarian crisis has taken hold of the entire **Gaza Strip**, with the population facing conditions of distress and struggling to survive.

We welcome the recent agreement between Israel and the European Union on scaling up humanitarian aid for the people in Gaza, as it provides some much-needed hope. The agreement demonstrates that dialogue with Israel can bear results. On this premise, we

urge Israel to allow and facilitate the safe, unconditional, massive and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid into the Strip.

We expect the agreed steps to be implemented with a sense of urgency. Allowing a substantially increased humanitarian aid to enter the Strip and opening the Southern and Northern crossings is imperative. Undoubtedly, to achieve this, the expertise of the UN, its Agency network and UNRWA remains invaluable.

At the same time, we stress that any humanitarian plan must adhere to the core principles of international humanitarian law, cover all parts of Gaza and support the existing humanitarian operations within the Strip. Israel's Gaza Humanitarian Fund plan falls short of this promise;

As efforts led by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, to secure a much-needed ceasefire deal are ongoing, let us recall that **hostages** continue to suffer, held in captivity by Hamas for 19 consecutive months. Having repeatedly condemned the October 7 terrorist attacks and the ongoing detention and inhumane treatment of hostages, we reiterate our demand for their immediate and unconditional release. We deplore the refusal of Hamas to hand them over.

While conditions in Gaza remain dire, the security situation in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** also raises concerns. We condemn the escalation and the continued settler violence, the expansion of illegal settlements and Israel's military operations. Settlement expansion is contrary to international law and the relevant Security Council Resolutions—seriously undermining the prospects for a Two-State Solution.

The repeated attacks on Taybeh, one of the Christian-majority villages in the West Bank, are particularly alarming. In the same vein, we express our deep sorrow for the tragic loss and casualties caused by the attack on the Catholic Church of the Holy Family in Gaza. Places of worship and religious sites should never be targeted.

Mr. President,

There is no military solution for Gaza. Greece, along with the UK and 27 international partners, recently came together with a simple, yet urgent message: the war in Gaza must end now. The only solution for Gaza would be a political one. We thus look forward to the upcoming High-Level Conference on the Implementation of the Two-State Solution under the co-chairpersonship of France and Saudi Arabia; hoping it will bring new impetus to the political process.

In this spirit, Greece is ready to engage to bring the Arab plan, as presented by Egypt, forward, developing it further, where necessary. The plan constitutes a constructive proposal for the day-after, when an empowered and reformed Palestinian Authority will be able to exert effective governance in Gaza and the West Bank. Without any government or security role for Hamas. And definitely without any forced displacement of Palestinians.

All sides must now harness the necessary political courage to agree to a ceasefire, end the war and pave the way toward a political process, towards two states living side by side, in peace and security.

Turning over to **Syria**, ahead of our monthly briefing next week, we echo the Secretary General's deep concern over the continued violence in the Druze-majority area of Suweida, resulting in hundreds of casualties, including civilians with reports also of summary executions. We condemn all acts of sectarian violence, echoing the Secretary General's plea towards the interim authorities and local leaders to de-escalate. We also echo the call towards the interim authorities to transparently and openly investigate the incidents, holding all those responsible into account.

Finally, yet importantly, **Lebanon** seems to be staying the right course; albeit not without significant challenges. Aware of UNIFIL's importance in preserving the cessation of hostilities—and, thus, for the maintenance of regional peace and security—Greece fully supports the Mission's mandate renewal. All parties need to fully abide by UNSC Resolution 1701 (2006) and the provisions of the November ceasefire understanding—contributing to the security of both Israel and Lebanon.

Reaffirming our commitment to the preservation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, we consider it imperative that we support the country's efforts to turn the page and the Lebanese government's efforts to extend its authority over the entire territory of Lebanon, while implementing much-necessary reforms. We commend the progress of the Lebanese Armed Forces in their redeployment and bringing all weapons under state control—indicative of the Lebanese leadership's resolve in meeting its international obligations. Greece is steadfast in its commitment of support for the Lebanese institutions, including the LAF.

Mr. President,

From Gaza and Syria, to Lebanon and the Red Sea, the Middle East is being transformed before our very eyes. Greece will continue to support the role of the UN and this Council in monitoring the transformation of this volatile region, adding its voice in support of regional and international peace and security.

Thank you.