

**Security Council Open Debate on the situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian Question
28 January 2025**

Statement delivered by
H.E. Mr. George Gerapetritis,
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Thank you, Mr. President.

I would like to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for his briefing and welcome the newly-elected members of the Council. We are looking forward to working with all of you.

Distinguished colleagues,

As Greece continues its tenure on this Council, we do so with clarity of purpose and a strong sense of responsibility. At a time when the international system is facing profound challenges, the United Nations -and the Security Council in particular- continues to provide the central and indispensable framework for dialogue, cooperation and collective action in support of international peace and security.

Greece's foreign policy is firmly grounded in respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the principles enshrined therein: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and the prohibition of the threat or use of force. These principles are not abstract ideals. They constitute the foundation of a stable international order and guide our collective work within this Council.

Peace in the Middle East is an urgent moral, political and humanitarian imperative.

Greece consistently supports all initiatives that can have a tangible positive impact on the ground and bring the region closer to a lasting peace and stability. In this spirit, we have strongly supported the Comprehensive Plan for **Gaza** and voted in favor of Security Council resolution 2803 (2025). We acknowledge the progress achieved towards sustained ceasefire and the implementation of the 20-point Gaza Peace Plan, endorsed by this Council.

We have been very relieved that the body of the last hostage has been returned to his family. This development concludes a deeply painful chapter for the families. It also opens the path for the full implementation of Phase Two, which is a truly decisive moment.

This next step must include full disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups. Addressing Israel's legitimate long-term security concerns is a key pre-condition for sustainable peace.

The nomination of a Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, with the support of the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority is a welcome development. It represents an important step toward legitimate and accountable governance, which is indispensable for stability, reconstruction and long-term peace. The future reconstruction of Gaza must be credible, coordinated and firmly anchored in legitimate governance structures and embedded in a broader political and credible political horizon.

Gaza and the West Bank is a single, indivisible territorial unit for a future Palestinian state. The path forward is clear —a credible political process leading to a two-state solution allowing Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace and security.

Greece stands ready to contribute actively and responsibly to the peace process, including through the scaling-up of humanitarian assistance and development aid in the West Bank. It continues to provide treatment to children from Gaza in Greek hospitals. We are also actively contributing to efforts aimed at stabilizing security conditions in Gaza, including through our participation in the Civil-Military Coordination Center.

Overall, our objective is clear: to help prepare the ground for the “day after” in Gaza, in close cooperation with the Palestinian National Committee and the Palestinian Authority as well as with key regional partners, such as Egypt.

Peace requires the protection of civilians. Today, despite significant progress on the delivery of food and other goods, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains difficult. Harsh weather conditions, devastated infrastructure and shortages of food, water and medical supplies continue to exacerbate suffering. Humanitarian access, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor, must therefore be unimpeded.

We are also concerned with recent developments affecting UNRWA, notably the demolition of its facilities in East Jerusalem.

Beyond Gaza, the situation in the West Bank is steadily deteriorating. Rising settler violence, including against Christian communities erodes trust and fuels instability on the ground. We also call for a halt to settlement activities, including in the E1 area.

As the Greek Prime Minister stated during his recent visit to Ramallah and Jerusalem, Greece's support for the Palestinian Authority is unwavering. It remains the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as such must be empowered politically and financially. The Palestinian Authority has been very serious in promoting reforms. Furthermore, withheld tax revenues must be released immediately.

Equally, the preservation of the Status Quo of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is of paramount importance. Jerusalem is not only a city of profound religious significance, but a litmus test for coexistence and mutual respect.

Mr. President,

Turning to **Lebanon**, this Council's visit to Beirut last December was more than symbolic. It sent a clear message: Lebanon is not alone.

We welcome the progress achieved in Phase One of the national disarmament plan, which brings Lebanon closer to restoring full control over its territory, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Nevertheless, disarmament must be coupled with sustained capacity-building as well as a clear plan for reconstruction. Greece considers Lebanon as a key partner for peace. It will support Lebanon in its efforts for security and prosperity. It recently delivered military equipment to the Lebanese Armed Forces and stands ready to do more. In the same vein, we welcome the organization of an International Conference in Paris, on March 5, aiming at garnering international support toward the LAF and we are looking forward to our participation.

For **Syria**, 2025 has been a landmark year. The fall of the Assad regime gives a historic opportunity to a country of great importance for the Arab world and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Greece stands by Syria and is offering support bilaterally and in its capacity as EU and Security Council member.

We must acknowledge the progress achieved so far but we should also not disregard the persisting challenges. We welcome the assurances by the Syrian government regarding adherence to international law and good neighborly relations. We expect them to be honored, especially in terms of maritime delimitations with neighbouring states.

Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be fully respected.

We also support the country's engagement with the United Nations and warmly encourage its further enhancement, looking forward to the prompt establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy in Damascus.

At the same time, we should not forget that 2025 was marked by violence against Alawites, Druze, Christians and lately the Kurds. We need more information, clarity and, indeed, accountability.

We reiterate the need for an inclusive transition and protection of all Syrians, including women, without any discrimination whatsoever due to religious or ethnic background, as a prerequisite for stability and recovery. Syria's wealth lies in its diverse and pluralistic society. Civilians must be protected under all circumstances.

The latest developments in the Northeast prove how fragile the transition remains and causes concern.

The ceasefire agreement reached between the Syrian government and the SDF should be fully implemented by all sides. We call on all actors, including external ones, to act with restraint and avoid escalation that could destabilize the country and exacerbate ethnic tensions. The protection of Kurds must be fully ensured and their political and cultural rights safeguarded in a united Syria.

We would also like to underline the need to tackle terrorism and extremism, and address the military and security sector reform.

In particular, the fight against DAESH/ISIS should continue and detainees' camps must be fully safeguarded.

Finally, on **Yemen**, we reaffirm our full respect for the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity and we call upon all parties to engage constructively and in good faith in an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations.

Despite de-escalation in the South, we remain vigilant.

While the situation in the Red Sea is becoming more complicated, we reiterate the importance of maritime security and freedom of navigation. The Red Sea constitutes a vital waterway for the region and the world and the Houthis continue to pose a serious threat in this regard. Greece, honoring its long maritime tradition, will continue to support regional and international initiatives, and provide her leadership to EU Naval Operation Aspides, in line with Council resolutions and in full respect of international law.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

Greece remains firmly committed to working with all members of this Council, with the United Nations, and with regional partners to turn commitments into action so that hope prevails over suffering, dignity over despair and peace becomes a reality delivered.

As a country of the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece is deeply conscious of the direct impact that instability in the region has on international peace and security. This awareness, together with our longstanding commitment to multilateralism and international law,

underpins our readiness to act as a constructive and reliable partner in efforts to promote dialogue, de-escalation and lasting peace.

I thank you.