

Statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs  
H. E. Mr. FUJII Hisayuki  
At the United Nations Security Council Briefing on  
Middle East  
18 November 2024

Thank you, Mr. President,

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his informative briefing.

Over a year has passed since the reprehensible terror attacks by Hamas and others on October 7<sup>th</sup> and we do not have the words to describe the devastation in Gaza.

Tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been killed and injured. Millions are internally displaced. Nearly the entire Strip is flattened, leaving only a few buildings intact. Little humanitarian supplies have been able to enter northern Gaza for over a month. UN officials have even described the situation as “apocalyptic”.

Japan’s policy has been consistent: All parties must immediately agree to a ceasefire as well as the release of the hostages, comply with international law, and drastically improve the humanitarian situation. And, we support the tireless mediation efforts by the relevant stakeholders to this end.

Our new administration led by Prime Minister ISHIBA shares the same principle. Minister for Foreign Affairs IWAYA has been actively engaging and directly talking with foreign ministers in the Middle East, including both Israel and Palestine, to call for an end to the agony in Gaza and beyond.

Japan also remains resolute in tackling this humanitarian nightmare, where so many desperate Palestinians do not even know when they will receive their next meal. At the same time, the international community must do whatever possible to alleviate their suffering.

Mr. President,

The exchange of attacks between Iran and Israel is deeply concerning, and a full-fledged war in the region must be avoided at all costs. We strongly condemn any action that escalates the situation.

The hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah has significantly worsened the humanitarian situation in Lebanon and Syria. In addition to the uprooting of thousands of civilian lives, UNIFIL personnel and related facilities have also been targeted in Lebanon. We renew our call for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, and urge all parties to fully implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including UNSCR 1701.

Mr. President,

In order to respond to the humanitarian crises in the region, including the catastrophic situation in Gaza, it is imperative to significantly increase the amount of aid and allow greater humanitarian access. In this vein, the protection of humanitarian aid workers is of paramount importance. Hundreds of humanitarian personnel, including more than 240 UNRWA staff members, lost their lives, some while on duty. This is totally unacceptable.

UNRWA plays an indispensable role in providing humanitarian assistance, health care, education and other vital support to Palestine refugees, not only in Gaza and the West Bank but also throughout the region.

Japan reiterates its grave concern over the legislation adopted by the Israeli Knesset that would severely restrict the activities of UNRWA. We strongly urge the Government of Israel to ensure a safe and unhindered operating space for UNRWA.

Ensuring neutrality is likewise crucial for UNRWA. We must not tolerate any terror attacks by Hamas. We support UNRWA's efforts to implement the recommendations from the Independent Review Group.

Mr. President,

The situation in the West Bank is rapidly deteriorating with a rise in settler violence. We reiterate our deep regret over the continuing settlement activities by the Government of Israel, which are in violation of international law.

The only viable solution to the Middle East conflict is the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine. Japan continues to support the realization of the two-state solution.

In this regard, we have led several initiatives, such as "the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity", which aims to promote regional cooperation by establishing an agro-industrial park in the West Bank and facilitating the transportation of goods.

To bring peace and stability to the region, the first step requires building trust among the parties concerned and Japan will spare no effort in this endeavor.

I thank you.