

Brussels, 01/07/2016

Message by High Representative Federica Mogherini on the occasion of the release of the Middle East Quartet Report

01/07/2016

In times of multiple crises, we tend to focus on the most recent one. But particularly in times like these, we cannot lose sight of the conflict in Israel and Palestine. We need to shake life back into the peace process, and do it as a matter of urgency. Violence is on the rise every single day, with victims of both sides. We risk a new escalation, and the very chance of peace is slipping away. We cannot afford it.

Too many Israelis and Palestinians are losing hope. But despair can only lead to more violence. We have a responsibility to give credibility to the perspective of peace.

This is why the European Union has invested so much in the Quartet for the Middle East, working together with the United States, Russia and the United Nations. And this is why we have worked on the Report we present today.

For the first time in over a decade, together with our international partners, we have set out what the threats to peace are, and what needs to be done to recreate the conditions for meaningful final status negotiations.

First, the parties must work to de-escalate tensions and strengthen security cooperation. The Israeli policy of settlement construction and expansion has to come to an end. The Palestinians have to combat terrorism and refrain from all incitement to violence. The militant build-up in Gaza has to stop, while the movement restrictions need to be lifted quickly.

Second, both sides have to move towards a two-State solution on the ground. This means to empower the Palestinians to take full control of their lives, including in Area C. And it also means to take into account the Israelis' legitimate security concerns.

Only the two sides can take responsibility for peace. The international community cannot substitute the parties. Only direct negotiations can lead to peace. But we need the political leaders to show their commitment, and implement the recommendations of the Report in full.

At the same time, regional players have a key role to play. The Arab Peace Initiative offers a vision for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In times of regional turmoil, some new opportunities for peace have also raised. No one can afford to miss these opportunities.

Starting with the small steps, and moving towards a real political process, we need this work to begin. With the Israelis and the Palestinians, with key Arab players, with the whole international community – and the European Union will continue to play its role in full.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NXiOSqhC6o>