

**The Permanent Mission of Iceland
to the United Nations**

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Gréta Gunnarsdóttir
Permanent Representative**

**The situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question**

23 January 2013

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Mr. President,

The conflict in Syria must be stopped.

The Council's inability, so far, to unite in action, weakens the prospects for peace with the conflict already having had dire consequences for Syria and the Syrian people. We are all aware of the tremendous cost with over 60,000 people killed and the already high numbers of refugees and internally displaced increasing every day. The Icelandic Government for its part decided last week to contribute close to 200,000 USD to UN humanitarian assistance.

The Security Council must take the lead to foster a political and peaceful solution for the sake of Syria and the Syrian people, as well as for wider regional stability which can easily be threatened should the conflict continue. Waiting is not an option. The Security Council has the responsibility and the tools to maintain international peace and security and the situation calls for its urgent action.

It must be ensured that the regime, and anyone else responsible for the horrible atrocities committed, will at the end of the day be held accountable. For this reason Iceland was among 57 Member States who jointly sent the Security Council a letter last week, requesting the Council to refer the situation in Syria since March 2011 to the ICC. We would like to use the opportunity here today to reiterate this request.

Mr. President,

The Palestinian people enjoy an overwhelming support by the UN Membership for their inalienable right to self-determination. This was clearly expressed by the UN membership on 29th November last year when the General Assembly welcomed the State of Palestine as a non-member observer state.

This development will hopefully persuade the Security Council to take on a more active role in solving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

For too long, and especially in the absence of a peace process, the involvement of the international community has mainly been reactionary, with statements being issued on an ad hoc basis in reaction to individual actions, such as the recent decision of the Israeli Government to go ahead with building new settlements in E1. If the international community is committed to the two state solution, it has to become proactive instead of being a passive bystander.

Mr. President,

“We exist” – this is a phrase from an appeal sent by Palestinians in and around area E1 to ask relevant parties to advocate on their behalf, not to be evicted from their homes and displaced again. “We exist” – this from people who have again and again been victims of demolitions of their properties, rendering them and their families repeatedly homeless. “We exist” - Is a necessary reminder for all of us that in the end, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is about people that do indeed exist and their land.

Iceland would like to use this opportunity to urge the Security Council to:

- Visit the State of Palestine;
- Reaffirm the illegality of the settlements;
- Accept the application of the State of Palestine for UN membership; and finally
- Get the parties back to the negotiation table.

Thank you, Mr. President