

STATEMENT OF THE QUARTET

The Quartet Principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner - met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

The Quartet expressed its deep concern over recent factional violence in Gaza. It called for all Palestinians to immediately renounce all acts of violence and respect the ceasefire. It called upon the Palestinian Authority government, in cooperation with President Abbas and regional actors, to do everything necessary to restore law and order, including the release of kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston.

The Quartet strongly condemned the continued firing of Qassam rockets into Southern Israel as well as the buildup of arms by Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza. It endorsed PA President Abbas' call for an immediate end to such violence, and called upon all elements of the PA government and all Palestinian groups to cooperate with President Abbas to that end. The Quartet called for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit. The Quartet urged Israel to exercise restraint to ensure that its security operations avoid civilian casualties or damage to civilian infrastructure. It noted that the detention of elected members of the Palestinian government and legislature raises particular concerns and called for them to be released. The Quartet noted its support for the May 30th Security Council Press Statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

The Quartet welcomed continued dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, including bilateral summits, and expressed support for U.S. efforts to effect progress on security and movement and access issues. The Quartet agreed that movement and access are essential and in this regard called on both parties to implement fully the Movement and Access Agreement of 15 November 2005. The Quartet urged the parties to work positively and constructively in order to build confidence and to create an environment conducive to progress on the political horizon for Palestinian statehood, consistent with the Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, which should also be addressed in these bilateral discussions. Palestinians must know that their state will be viable, and Israelis must know a future state of Palestine will be a source of security, not a threat.

The Quartet commended the excellent work of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) and endorsed its extension for three months from July until September 2007. It called on donors to follow through on past pledges of support. The Quartet noted that the resumption of transfers of tax and customs revenues collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority would have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy. The Quartet encouraged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to consider resumption of such transfers via the Temporary International Mechanism to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. In light of increased regional support for the Palestinians, the Quartet agreed to review where additional donor assistance should be focused, with particular consideration for infrastructure and development programmes that can directly improve the daily lives of Palestinians. The Quartet invited concrete proposals from the parties on specific international support that could be useful at this stage.

The Quartet welcomed the extension of the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EU-BAM). It reiterated the importance of resuming normal operations at the Rafah crossing. Taking note of the continuing threat to Israeli and Palestinian security posed by smuggling, the Quartet welcomed progress in the Quadrilateral Security Committee and called for greater efforts by all parties to improve security along the Egypt-Gaza border.

The Quartet welcomed the re-affirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative, noting that the initiative is recognized in the Roadmap as a vital element of international efforts to advance regional peace. The Arab

Peace Initiative provides a welcome regional political horizon for Israel, complementing the efforts of the Quartet and of the parties themselves to advance towards negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Quartet noted its positive meeting with members of the Arab League in Sharm al-Sheikh on May 4, and looked forward to continued engagement with the Arab states. It welcomed the intention of the Arab League to engage Israel on the initiative, and Israeli receptiveness to such engagement. Recalling elements of the April 18 decision by the Arab League Follow-up Committee, the Quartet urged all involved to demonstrate their seriousness and commitment to making peace. In that context, the Quartet reiterated the need for a Palestinian Government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and reaffirmed its willingness to support such a government. The Quartet encouraged continued and expanded Arab contacts with Israel, and Israeli action to address concerns raised in the April 18 Arab League decision, including a cessation of settlement expansion and the removal of illegal outposts, as called for in the Roadmap.

Looking ahead, the Quartet discussed a calendar for the coming months to support and encourage progress on the bilateral and regional tracks. The Quartet principals agreed to meet in the region in June with the Israelis and Palestinians to review progress and discuss the way forward. The Quartet also agreed to meet in the region with members of the Arab League to follow up on the Arab Peace Initiative and efforts to advance the regional track. Principals instructed the envoys to meet beforehand to follow up and explore options for the way forward.

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