

# Hiba Qasas Statement

*The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question - UN Security Council, 10108th meeting*

United Nations, New York | February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Mr. President, Excellencies and Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I wish to start by thanking the United Kingdom for the invitation to brief the Council.

I address you today as a Palestinian raised in the West Bank under insecurity and occupation, as a new Swiss citizen and Founding Executive Director of the Geneva based Principles for Peace Foundation, a global peacebuilding organisation.

And as the convener of the Uniting for a Shared Future coalition which brings together more than 550 Israeli and Palestinian leaders across security, politics, business, civil society and media.

We came together in the wake of October 7 and the war in Gaza. And built our coalition around enlightened self interest.

Today USF is the main functioning binational infrastructure at scale where senior leaders from both peoples still engage and organise pragmatic action for a political solution within a regional framework.

Our coalition carries the trauma, fears, and aspirations of both peoples. Palestinians live through occupation, loss, displacement, and violence. Israelis live insecurity, loss, fear, and uncertainty.

We do not relativize pain, and we do not dehumanise the other. We are realists, possibilists, and patriotic pragmatists in equal measures.

We start from one truth: the status quo is not sustainable for either people. Neither side can have lasting safety, dignity, and freedom at the expense of the other.

We welcome this Council's Resolution 2803 and the Global Alliance, which keep the political horizon central. We also express gratitude to the United States administration for its leadership with regional partners, in brokering the ceasefire and sustaining attention on what comes next.

Phase Two will decide whether this is a bridge to stability or a pause before the next war. It will only hold if Gaza recovery is inseparable from the West Bank: linked in design, protected by safeguards, and anchored in a clear, time bound political destination.

## **Gaza cannot succeed if the West Bank collapses.**

President Trump spoke of a golden era for the Middle East, that future is possible and can only be unlocked by resolving the Israeli Palestinian conflict, removing a central driver of instability and a fuel for radicalisation.

As long as this conflict remains unresolved, regional normalisation and integration will remain fragile, contested, and fraught.

That is why success will require an alliance of the willing prepared to advance the New York Declaration and the President's plan through disciplined implementation and investment, mutual accountability, and sustained political cover.

The facts are stark. In Gaza, displacement and despair are near total and access remains constrained at key crossings.

In the West Bank, record settler attacks, demolitions, displacement, and accelerating settlement and outpost activity are eroding contiguity, alongside administrative and cabinet measures that facilitate changes in land control and ownership.

These actions are dangerous for Palestinians, and also dangerous for Israelis, because they fuel insecurity, radicalisation, and the collapse of any credible political destination.

Our coalition developed immediate confidence building measures, with an implementation pathway to safeguard the political horizon while Phase Two is underway.

I will highlight seven priorities requiring active engagement by the Board of Peace and the Council:

**First**, ease movement and access in Gaza and the West Bank. Reverse the ban on humanitarian NGOs. Operationalise and modernise Gaza crossings, and ease movement in the West Bank, including routes via Jordan and permits for labour and commerce.

**Second**, restore Palestinian fiscal and banking functionality to prevent PA collapse. Release withheld revenues, restore correspondent banking, and unblock currency circulation so salaries can be paid and the private sector can restart.

**Third**, back political, governance and administrative PA reform with realistic expectations and verification, and supporting credible Palestinian elections.

**Fourth**, protect territorial feasibility now to safeguard and advance the political horizon. Halting steps that sever contiguity, beginning with freezing E1, & expansion in the southern Jerusalem corridor, as well as stopping changes to land ownership in the West Bank.

**Fifth**, deter violence and incitement on all sides. Apply consequences for terrorism, militia regrouping, and settler violence, and ensure any security and stabilisation architecture, including ISF deployment and disarmament, is verifiable and accountable from day one.

**Sixth**, enable legitimate transitional governance in Gaza. Allowing NCAG members to enter and operate under international political protection and link the technocratic Palestinian administration in Gaza with the West Bank.

**Seventh**, support an Israeli and Palestinian political dialogue track by starting with what already exists: USF's dialogue infrastructure and the new USF Political Horizon Working Group, facilitated by Switzerland and launched in Davos.

Excellencies, let me be clear about the political destination.

Regional stability, prosperity, and security require a new regional political and security architecture that resolves the Israeli Palestinian conflict through a non militarised Palestinian state living side by side, in safety and security, next to Israel, embedded in an integrated and safer neighbourhood.

Our coalition is a supportive constituency for the success of Phase Two in Gaza as a bridge to that horizon.

Our offer to the Council is practical and ready to deploy:

**First**, an Israeli-Palestinian political dialogue infrastructure you can use immediately, as a nucleus and shadow dialogue capability when no official channel exists.

**Second**, a sounding board for implementation,

**Third**, legitimacy and delivery support, mobilising public consent and private sector capacity.

As the main binational coalition of Israeli and Palestinian leaders working for this horizon, the Uniting for a Shared Future Coalition stands ready to engage with the Board of Peace, Council members, and regional and national partners to help translate political intent into executable steps.

I close with gratitude to the UK presidency for this platform. On behalf of our coalition and Principles for Peace, we welcome the United Kingdom's initiative to host a peacebuilding conference and launch a Peace Fund to support civil society in Israel and Palestine.

I also thank the governments that have backed our work, including Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, Switzerland, Belgium, and regional partners engaged through our wider MENA dialogue efforts, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Excellencies, I was raised in a reality where each generation inherits the trauma, fear, and unfinished business of the last.

That is not a strategy.

It is a sentence.

We can either condemn both peoples to a perpetual state of insecurity, loss, trauma, and occupation, or emancipate both peoples from this reality.

As solution-minded leaders, we are committed to work with everything we have for the second, because both our peoples and the people of the region deserve better.

Thank you.

## **Hiba Qasas**

*Founding Executive Director  
of Principles for Peace*

