

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates

The address of His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita

Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates

Chairman of the 160th session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level

Before the emergency meeting of the Council

Cairo, Wednesday, 11 October 2023

Your Highnesses and Excellencies,

Your Excellency Mr. Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen,

Under the auspices of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco, in its capacity as the President of the 160th ministerial-level session of the League Council, has convened this emergency meeting. The purpose of this gathering is to engage in discussions and coordinate efforts concerning the escalating crisis in the Gaza Strip, which has seen a surge in military actions targeting innocent civilians. Our aim is to seek ways to halt this perilous escalation.

The recent events that we have all witnessed, marked by bloodshed and horror, accompanied by unprecedented violence and dangerous tension, indicate that we are confronted with a situation of extraordinary gravity. The conflict appears to be moving into uncharted territory, with consequences for the region that are difficult to predict.

The situation is nothing short of tragic, characterised by the severity, atrocity, and cruelty that these words imply: a rising death toll, thousands wounded, a mass exodus of over 170,000 people, and a complete siege on the Gaza area. This blockade includes the denial of access to basic necessities such as water, food, fuel, and medicine.

The targeting of civilians by any party and the attacks on them are deeply troubling and underscore the urgency of ensuring their full protection under international humanitarian law. They should never be regarded as targets or victims of this conflict.

All of this is unfolding amidst a disturbing and systematic separatist rhetoric that offers little hope for the immediate future. It seems that we have not yet fully grasped the reality that violence begets more violence and that exclusion breeds further exclusion. Extremism only leads to more extremism.

Certainly, it is impossible to divorce these current events from the root causes that have long contributed to the volatile situation, including the ongoing political stalemate concerning the

Palestinian issue and the persistent and unjust unilateral actions taken by Israel in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian territories.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who serves as the Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, has previously expressed his deep concern about these factors, strongly condemning the repeated incursions into the revered Al-Aqsa Mosque. He has warned that such actions, which are utterly unacceptable, only serve to fuel extremism, perpetuate a culture of violence, and further inflame the conflict. His Majesty has consistently advocated for efforts to quell the situation and establish a framework for a two-state solution, thereby undermining the chances for a comprehensive, fair, and lasting peace.

Today, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its firm stance that the violation of the established legal and historical status in the city of Jerusalem, along with the disregard for Palestinian rights, is unacceptable and must come to an end. This is essential for the cause of peace and stability and to prevent the transformation of a political conflict into a religious one, the consequences of which would be dire for all. His Majesty the King has emphasised this on multiple occasions. Jerusalem must continue to be a place of convergence, a symbol of peaceful coexistence for adherents of the three monotheistic religions, and a hub for the values of mutual respect and dialogue.

Your Highnesses, Excellencies, and esteemed guests,

The term "dangerous" no longer adequately describes the current situation in the Middle East. We are facing an unprecedented escalation that has unleashed a series of confrontations and intensified the cycle of violence and counter-violence. This intensity threatens to obliterate any remaining opportunities and aspirations for the people of the region to establish a lasting and comprehensive peace.

This dire situation also raises questions for the international community, the influential nations, and the permanent members of the Security Council. We must reflect on the efficacy of their approach to this long-standing crisis:

- Where are the mechanisms established to monitor and respond to this issue and its developments, and how effective are they?**
- What tangible results have been achieved thus far?**
- Can the international community be content with merely managing the crisis and issuing empty statements that lack impact?**

From the perspective of the Kingdom of Morocco, our emergency council meeting today must centre on accomplishing four primary objectives:

First: We must exert all efforts to restore calm and halt the bloodshed. This necessitates collective or individual action by the active international forces to promptly cease the ground confrontations, reduce the escalation, protect civilians, prevent their targeting, and halt provocations and unilateral actions to prevent an uncontrollable escalation.

Second: It is crucial to assess the immediate health and humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip and other affected Palestinian territories. An emergency meeting has been scheduled for the Council of Arab Health Ministers to address these needs and establish means to deliver aid promptly.

Third: We must reinforce the negotiating position of our Palestinian brothers by expediting national reconciliation and bridging internal differences. We applaud the ongoing efforts of our sisterly League of Arab States and the Republic of Egypt to facilitate genuine Palestinian reconciliation, which we urge them to continue tirelessly.

Fourth: We must urge the international parties that support the peace process, including the international Quartet, to initiate substantive consultations aimed at revitalising the peace process. This should include the development of a roadmap with practical objectives, including a timeline for meaningful negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties to reach a final resolution in accordance with international and Arab references.

In this context, I reaffirm the unwavering support of the Kingdom of Morocco for the State of Palestine and its legitimate national authority, led by His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen. Our commitment is to defend the rights of the Palestinian people and work towards their aspirations for freedom, independence, and a dignified life.

Your Highnesses, Excellencies, and distinguished guests,

In accordance with His Majesty the King's emphasis in his profound message on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, "the security and stability of the Middle East necessitates unwavering commitment and persistent, continuous efforts to transition from the paradigm of conflict and violence to that of peace and cooperation. We must work together to create a prosperous environment for all the region's peoples."

Under the leadership of His Majesty the King, the Kingdom of Morocco is steadfast in its dedication to a just and comprehensive peace, grounded in international legitimacy resolutions. This commitment stands as an indispensable strategic choice, and we are prepared to actively participate in any international initiative aimed at realising the Palestinian people's aspirations to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the internationally accepted two-state solution within the borders of June 1967. This approach is essential for securing a peaceful, prosperous future for the generations to come in the region.

Thank you.