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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER**

### *The Palestinian ambassador pays a courtesy visit to the Speaker*

The Ambassador of Palestine, Fadi Hanania, paid a courtesy visit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dr Anġlu Farrugia. During the meeting, both dignitaries focused their discussion and exchanged views on the unfolding situation in the Middle East.

The Speaker outlined the recent developments in the Middle East, particularly the current situation between Israel and Hamas, highlighting and deploring the killing of innocent people caught up in the crossfire between both sides. Dr Farrugia also referred to the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Gaza and urged the international community to increase its efforts to ensure that enough assistance is provided to the civilian population at the earliest possible time. He also referred to his speech delivered two days ago during the IPU conference held in Angola about the urgent Palestinian-Israeli conflict and with regard to the Two-State Solution.

Dr Farrugia expressed his concern about the conflict spilling over into neighbouring countries like the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. To pre-empt this scenario, it is imperative that regional stakeholders engage in a structured dialogue aimed at avoiding any further escalation of the situation, which could be detrimental to the wider region.

The Speaker also cited Malta's concern about the disinformation dished out on social media amidst the conflict in Gaza and emphasised that while freedom of expression needs to be ensured, disinformation and manipulation of information need to be addressed to avoid the risk of polarization and escalation of the conflict, which could foment the rise of terrorist acts beyond the borders of the Middle East.

The Speaker stressed that the only viable path towards peace remains the achievement of a just and comprehensive resolution to the conflict where violent acts have no place and addressing the legitimate concerns and aspirations of both sides, in line with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.