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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the
rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-fourth year

Identical letters dated 3 January 2019 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Despite the universal hopes that arise with the start of each new year, this year has, regrettably, once again begun on a dismal note for the Palestinian people. Ignoring all calls for respect for international law, Israel, the occupying Power, has persisted with its illegal policies and practices, including in particular its settlement activities, further entrenching its illegal occupation and inflicting severe harm and suffering on our people.

On 26 December 2018, in the midst of the holiday week and Christmas celebrations, the occupation authorities announced the approval of thousands more illegal settlement units in Occupied Palestine. Plans were revealed for the construction of more than 2,500 settlement units, intended to house thousands upon thousands more Israeli settlers unlawfully transferred to our land, as well as the construction of two industrial zones, aimed at further facilitating the exploitation of our natural resources.

According to figures by the Israeli non-governmental organization, Peace Now, in 2018 alone, the occupying Power knowingly advanced the construction of at least 5,618 settlement units, with the majority of such illegal settlement activities taking place in areas deep inside the occupied West Bank and particularly in and around East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In this connection, Israel is proceeding with plans for the confiscation of a vast tract of land comprising 1,182 dunams (equivalent to 118 hectares) south of Bethlehem, referred to as the so-called E2 area, clearing the way for its establishment of another illegal settlement, further encircling Bethlehem with settlements and further destroying any possibility of realizing the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

As part of this illegal colonization campaign, Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to demolish Palestinian homes, destroying, on 2 January, a house belonging to the Al-Mughrabi family in the Qalandiya area of the West Bank, rendering the six people, including a disabled man, homeless. According to Office for



the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documentation, in 2018, Israel demolished or seized 459 structures in the West Bank, the majority in Jerusalem and Area C, causing the displacement of 472 Palestinians, including 216 children and 127 women from their homes.

In Occupied East Jerusalem alone, the occupying Power has demolished at least 177 structures in the past year, including 39 homes, displacing or otherwise affecting more than 1,000 Palestinians. Thousands more families remain under threat of forced displacement as their homes and properties are targeted for demolition by Israel, most often under the pretext of “lack of building permits”, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to acquire from the occupying Power. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in Area C alone there are over 13,000 pending demolition orders against homes and other properties, including 40 issued against schools.

Such actions constitute blatant contempt and systematic violations of numerous United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in which the Council specifically demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard. Here, it must be underscored that such obligations include legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which the Council, along with the International Court of Justice, have unequivocally determined is applicable to our territory and for which the High Contracting Parties to the Convention are obligated to respect and ensure respect.

In this case of Israel’s flagrant perpetration of grave breaches of the Convention, it is the duty of the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to act to uphold the rule of law, ensure accountability and bring a halt to this illegal behaviour, which is depriving a people of its patrimony and rights, including to self-determination, forcibly displacing them, creating a coercive environment inflicting widespread human suffering and humanitarian need and undermining any chances for a peaceful solution. Moreover, it is the duty of the International Criminal Court to ensure accountability for such war crimes, which those colonization activities clearly constitute.

Measures to ensure accountability are urgent to bring an end to such impunity. Absent consequences, it seems patently clear that Israel, the occupying Power, will continue its relentless perpetration of such crimes, irreversibly dismantling the two-State solution and destroying all prospects for peace. Accountability is also urgent in the light of ongoing provocative statements regarding Jerusalem and threats by some States to establish their diplomatic representations to Israel there, in direct and flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions [478 \(1980\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#), including operative paragraphs 3 and 5 thereof, and other relevant resolutions. Such illegal actions can only further exacerbate the situation on the ground and the search for peace and must be averted.

At the same time, we lament the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, has also persisted with its inhumane policies against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation, persisting with its violation of their human rights and constant terror and violence inflicting pervasive human insecurity, a situation that continues to constitute a serious protection crisis. Palestinian civilians continue to be wantonly killed and injured by the Israeli occupying forces. This includes the killing on 22 December 2018 of four Palestinians, including two boys: Mohammed Jahjough (age 16), Abdulaziz Abu Sharia (age 28) and Maher Yasin (age 40), who were killed in the Gaza Strip by Israeli snipers shooting at protesters in the ongoing Great March of Return, and Qasem Abbasi (age 17), in Jerusalem. In total, at least 295 Palestinians

were killed by the Israeli occupying forces in 2018 and more than 29,000 were injured, the highest casualty toll since Israel's war on the Gaza Strip in 2014.

Palestinian civilians also continue to be routinely arrested, detained and imprisoned by the occupying Power, which continues to particularly target our male youth population. In just the past two days, at least 35 Palestinians have been arrested and detained by the Israeli occupying forces in military raids carried out across the West Bank, particularly in the areas of Al-Khalil (Hebron), Nablus, Jenin and Bethlehem. Among those detained are at least seven children, including Yassin Ragheb al-Froukh (age 16), Qussai Nimr al-Froukh (age 16), Abdullah Musa Jaradat (age 16), Tareq Nabil Ali (age 16), Qussai Asaad Ishteivi (age 15), Mohammed Abdelrazek Hanoun (age 16) and Mutaz Abu Zaid (age 16). Such violent raids and arrests continue to add to the number of Palestinians held captive by this brutal occupation, which is now at nearly 6,000 people.

At the outset of 2019, we must once again reiterate our longstanding appeal to the international community, at the forefront the Security Council, to address this crisis by acting collectively to uphold international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, towards holding Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes. Only accountability can end such impunity and deter future violations, saving human lives and averting more suffering. Only accountability can salvage the two-State solution and the prospects for a just peace.

We urge the international community to uphold its commitments and act with responsibility to protect the Palestinian civilian population and to revive the hopes and possibility for real progress in this new year towards bringing an end to the Israeli occupation since 1967 and achieving a just and lasting peace on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, as most recently and resoundingly reaffirmed by the General Assembly, on 6 December 2018, in its adoption of resolution [73/89](#) on a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

This letter is in follow-up to our 653 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 ([A/55/432-S/2000/921](#)) to 14 December 2018 ([A/ES-10/804-S/2018/1114](#)) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all those war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Ambassador

Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations