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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 25 March 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

I write to you with urgency, warning of the dangerous escalation of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially at this moment in the besieged Gaza Strip. We appeal to the international community to act with responsibility to de-escalate the situation and to ensure the protection of innocent civilian lives. The Security Council, in particular, is duty-bound to act to avert another deadly cycle of violence and maintain international peace and security.

As I write to you, 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip – children, women and men – are once again enduring the terror of Israeli airstrikes and bombings, bracing themselves for the destruction and grief that will surely follow for our civilians, who have nowhere to shelter from such aggression and cruel collective punishment of the entire population. Over the past few hours, hundreds of missiles have been fired from Israeli warplanes at areas throughout the densely-populated Gaza Strip, and Israeli tanks and soldiers are amassing at the borders of cause, causing panic and fear of yet another war to spread among the population.

The intensification of inflammatory rhetoric and threats by Israel, the occupying Power, should be cause for extreme worry for the international community, which has too many times stood by and witnessed the slaughter of innocent, defenceless Palestinian civilians. We urge that the early warnings be heeded and that action be taken, including immediate mediation efforts, with a view to preventing such brutality and devastation once again.

The Security Council must demand respect for international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and for all of its relevant resolutions, including resolutions [1860 \(2009\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#) and all resolutions pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We also call, in this regard, for the deployment of the good offices of the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, along with all concerned parties, towards the de-escalation of this dangerous situation and the protection of civilian life.



In that regard, I must also draw attention to the fact that the escalation of the past 24 hours has taken place against the backdrop of a series of Israeli attacks and murders of Palestinian civilians in the past week. Palestinian male youth have been specifically targeted by systematic violence that yet again affirms the occupying Power's blatant disregard for Palestinian lives. The most recent cycle began with the murder of four Palestinian youths within the span of 24 hours and has continued with utter impunity.

On 20 March, Israeli occupying forces killed Raed Hashem Muhammad Hamdan, 21, and Zaid Imad Muhammad Nuri, 20, opening fire on the two young victims as they rode in a car in Nablus and killing both young men. Just a few hours earlier, another young Palestinian, Omar Abu Leila, 19, was shot and killed in the village of Ibwayn, north of Ramallah, after occupying forces surrounded his home and unleashed heavy fire, resulting in his death. Ahmed Jamal Manasra, 26, was also shot to death within the same 24-hour time span by Israeli occupying forces. Eyewitness testimony indicates that the young man was murdered in "cold blood", constituting yet another extrajudicial killing perpetrated by Israeli soldiers, as he tried to help his family, which had been involved in an accident at the southern entrance to Bethlehem.

In addition to the heinous acts of terror in the West Bank, the occupying Power continues to deliberately target Palestinian demonstrators in the blockaded Gaza Strip with live ammunition, rubber coated steel bullets, stun guns and tear gas canisters, causing death and injury to innocent civilians, including children. The toll of Israel's brutality against civilians since the start of the Great March of Return protests on 30 March 2018 has reached 269 persons killed and more than 29,000 persons injured, with many disabled for life after being shot by ammunition that shattered their bones and shredded their limbs. The most recent victims of this brutality, in grave breach of international law, were Nidal Abed Al-Karim Ahmad Shatat, 29, who was shot directly in the chest, and Jihad Munir Khalid Harar, 24, who was shot in the head by the Israeli occupying forces, on Friday, 22 March. In addition, on 24 March, 24-year-old Habib Al-Masri succumbed to wounds sustained when he was shot in the chest at an earlier protest.

As the one-year anniversary of the Great March of Return approaches, we must again draw attention to these crimes and again appeal to the international community to act with urgency to deter the killing and injury of more innocent civilians. In that regard, we recall the findings of the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate the response of the Israeli occupying forces to the demonstrations. The findings point to alarming and grave human rights violations and possible war crimes, with the commission finding "reasonable grounds to believe that demonstrators were shot in violation of their right to life or of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law" and that "the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces against demonstrators was unlawful". We call for serious follow-up of those findings, to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are held accountable and to ensure justice for the many innocent victims.

Once again, I must stress that civilian lives are in danger as the cycle of violence escalates at a rapid pace. The Security Council must demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease its military aggression against Gaza and cease all acts of aggression and terror against the Palestinian people. The world cannot remain silent as a defenceless people held captive under military occupation and blockade are systematically slaughtered. The obligation to protect civilians and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law must be upheld in all circumstances, and Palestine cannot remain the exception.

This letter is in follow-up to our 662 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 15 March 2019 (A/ES-10/814-S/2019/243), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these 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
