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

Security Council
Seventy-sixth year

Identical letters dated 18 March 2021 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

The situation in Occupied Palestine continues to worsen owing to Israel's human rights violations and war crimes. In particular, the occupying Power has escalated its appropriation of Palestinian homes, lands and properties, with the aim of accelerating the forced transfer of Palestinian civilians, especially in areas in and around occupied East Jerusalem, and entrenching its settlement colonization and annexation schemes.

Numerous Palestinian families in the Silwan and Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem are threatened with homelessness and forcible transfer from the City, like so many before them. At the moment, at least 37 families comprising 195 persons, most of them refugees, are at risk of eviction while settler groups, with the full support of the occupation's Government and judiciary, persist with campaigns to dispossess and displace these families, yet again, and replace them with Israeli-Jewish settlers.

These illegal actions are being carried out in countless ways every single day in Occupied Palestine, in grave breach of international humanitarian and criminal law and in violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including the specific prohibitions on policies and measures aimed at altering the character, demographic composition and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

As explained by Palestinian and partnering human rights organizations in an urgent joint appeal on 10 March 2021 to United Nations special rapporteurs, "Israeli settlement activities in Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan are part of a much larger scheme aimed at forcing the transformation of Jerusalem's demographic composition and cultural character to entrench exclusive Israeli-Jewish ownership over Jerusalem at the expense of its Palestinian protected population".

Moreover, they stress that, "through intensified settler-colonial policies and activities in East Jerusalem, which includes the neighbourhoods of Shaykh Jarrah, Silwan, the Old City, Wadi al-Jawz, At-Tur (Mount of Olives), Israel aims to consolidate its domination from West Jerusalem, extending to the E1 area surrounding



the illegal Ma'ale Adummim settlement in the eastern periphery of the city.” All Israeli actions to date point to this unlawful and destructive scheme.

As so many families live under the constant threat of being forcibly displaced in the coming months – with the recent court decisions ordering families in Shaykh Jarrah to abandon their homes by 2 May 2021, and families in Silwan by August 2021 – we must remind you that in just a little over a year, from the start of 2020 to March 2021, Israeli courts have approved the eviction of 33 Palestinian families with 165 members, including dozens of children, as documented by the Israeli non-governmental organization (NGO) Peace Now. In fact, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that around 90,000 Palestinians are at risk of evictions/demolitions in occupied East Jerusalem.

Indeed, Palestinian NGOs are being joined by Israeli and international NGOs in sending repeated warnings to the United Nations and the global community regarding the ongoing and impending forced displacements of Palestinian civilians from their homes and lands.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the period between 16 February and 1 March alone, 35 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized by Israel, displacing 98 people, including 53 children. Hundreds of Palestinian families are living in fear, awaiting decisions by Israeli courts regarding the fate of their homes. In addition to the above cases in occupied East Jerusalem, I must bring to your attention the imminent demolition of hundreds more Palestinian homes in Silwan after an Israeli court abandoned previous legal agreements and ruled instead in favour of establishing a biblical national park called “The King’s Garden”. If Israel continues with this massive demolition campaign, more than 1,500 Palestinians will immediately be displaced, most of whom are women and children.

As stressed in the above-mentioned joint appeal:

At a time when people around the world are trying to survive the global pandemic, Palestinians in East Jerusalem continue to endure an ongoing Nakba, as they continue to be denied their inalienable right of return to their homes, properties, and lands, and to be under threat of further displacement and dispossession. They undergo a lengthy, exhausting, and unaffordable legal struggle to challenge the eviction lawsuits filed against them by settler organizations before Israeli courts. Given the discriminatory and untransparent nature of the Israeli legal system, they are effectively denied access to the rule of law.

The institutionalized nature of such discriminatory practices has emboldened and made more extreme Israel’s settlers in Occupied Palestine, as they are not only backed by the State but also certain that their impunity will not be challenged, even by the judiciary. Against this backdrop, settler attacks against Palestinians and their properties have reached dangerous heights in recent months, reinforcing Israeli settlement expansion and annexation schemes. Similarly, the trends illustrate how such constant, unchecked settler violence is used as a tool to create an ever more coercive environment, facilitating greater control over Palestinian land, but without Palestinians, further proving Israel’s annexation aims.

Just to share one example, a Palestinian landowner has reported that Israeli settlers made no less than 15 attempts to take over his farm in Al-Baqa’a, east of Al-Khalil (Hebron), the most recent attack occurring on 16 March. Settlers have tried to destroy his crops, run him over and raze his land. Denied the protections of international humanitarian law, he has been able to remain in his land only with the protection of human rights activists who have repeatedly intervened and forced the settlers to leave the area. However, the threat remains and such systematic

harassment, intimidation and attacks are committed every day against Palestinians throughout Occupied Palestine as the occupying Power and its settler militias persist in their attempts to drive Palestinians from their lands through a combination of military orders and violence.

On 6 March, occupation authorities issued a military order to expropriate 658 dunums of Palestinian land in the village of Al-Ubeidiya, near Bethlehem, for a water project exclusively for illegal settlements and outposts in the area. The same day, also in Bethlehem, Israeli settlers from the Gush Etzion settlement chopped down and burned dozens of olive trees and attacked farmers, who were forced to leave at gun point.

On 9 March, a mob of 80 settlers forced their way into the Wadi Qana nature reserve, near Salfit, indiscriminately attacking several Palestinian farmers and livestock herders. For decades, Israel has violated international law with regard to Wadi Qana, imposing de facto annexation by placing it under the authority of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. As of today, Palestinians who have lived in Wadi Qana for generations cannot access their lands, while settlers from the nearby Karnei Shomron settlement enjoy unlimited access to the nature reserve and its natural resources.

For the second time in March 2021, occupation forces stormed Kifil Haris, near Salfit, and blocked the town's entry and exit roads to escort a religious march of extremist settlers, who proceeded to desecrate the town's shrines and attack homes. On 13 March, settlers from the illegal settlement of Givat Ronin attacked Palestinian residents and properties in the village of Burin, near Nablus, with settlers demolishing a Palestinian home under construction. Occupation forces intervened to protect the invading settlers, which resulted in the shooting of a Palestinian youth during the settler attack. On the same day, a mob of settlers launched a pre-dawn attack against Palestinian residents of Huwwarah, near Nablus, hurling stones at homes and vehicles. On 15 March, Israeli settlers attacked the village of Qaryut, preventing Palestinians from accessing their lands. The settlers went on to damage the village's farmlands and destroyed fences that had been put up to protect the residents from settler attacks.

On 8 March, Israeli forces stormed the village of Bani Na'im, near Al-Khalil, and demolished a Palestinian home under construction and a water well. On 9 March, Israeli occupation forces issued demolition orders to several Palestinian homes in Al-Jib, near Jerusalem, under the pretext that they had been built without permits. According to Israeli NGO Breaking the Silence, Israel has rejected nearly 99 per cent of Palestinian building permit applications over the years, making it impossible for Palestinians to build and develop their communities in their own land. The following day, residents of Walajah, also near Jerusalem, learned that an occupation court injunction on the demolition of 38 homes could be lifted next month, subjecting Palestinians to another wide-scale displacement campaign. The Israeli NGOs Ir Amim and Bimkom issued a joint report last week, alerting the international community, stating, inter alia:

Israel has been gradually confiscating Walajah lands and detaching it from the Palestinian space around it. While its northern segment is situated within the Jerusalem municipal borders, the construction of the Separation Barrier between 2010 and 2017 around three sides of the village turned it into a nearly isolated enclave. The barrier severed it from the rest of the city, while likewise separating it from some 1,200 dunums of the village's agricultural lands ... these lands were declared by the Israeli authorities as the Nahal Refaim National Park, a form of 'touristic settlement', which would serve to create Israeli territorial contiguity between Jerusalem and the Har Gillo settlement (part of the Gush

Etzion bloc), constituting another link in the de facto annexation of ‘Greater Jerusalem’.

At the same time, Israel persists with all of its repressive measures against Palestinian civilians, including massive arrest campaigns and raids. Israeli NGO B’Tselem released shocking footage showing Israeli soldiers arresting five Palestinian children, ranging from 8 to 13 years old, for picking vegetables near the illegal outpost of Havat Ma’on, which continues to be expanded on Palestinian land. “This is another example of the absolute disregard on the part of Israeli authorities and forces on the ground to the well-being and rights of Palestinians, no matter how young or vulnerable,” a B’Tselem spokesperson said.

In the early hours of 8 March, Israeli occupation forces arrested 32 Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem and conducted numerous pre-dawn raids throughout the occupied West Bank. On the same day, Israeli forces raided the offices of the Palestinian Health Work Committees in Ramallah, ransacking the building and confiscating computer equipment and documents. On 10 March, Israeli forces conducted several raids in various parts of the West Bank, arresting nine Palestinians, including the preacher of the Aqsa Mosque. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli forces conducted 184 search and arrest operations in the West Bank between 16 February and 1 March, arresting 158 Palestinians, with East Jerusalem being the prime target.

As the global community observed International Women’s Day last week, Israeli occupation forces raided a women’s centre in East Jerusalem, arresting two women involved in organizing an International Women’s Day event aimed at celebrating the role of women in Palestinian culture and heritage. The fact that the event was shut down illustrates the routine violence faced by Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. According to the Palestinian Prisoners’ Society, Israeli authorities are currently incarcerating 35 female Palestinian prisoners, 11 of whom are mothers.

Regrettably, accountability remains absent for these violations and the countless other crimes perpetrated throughout the course of Israel’s nearly 54-year military occupation, resulting in the endless oppression of the Palestinian people and devastating consequences for the goal of a just peace. Year after year, the international community condemns Israeli violations and crimes, but falls short of measures aimed at actually implementing international law and holding Israel accountable. However, it remains the international community’s responsibility to oppose these violations of fundamental principles of international law and to act collectively to bring a halt to such impunity, rather than green-lighting it through a lack of tangible action or, worse, complicity, such as what we are regrettably witnessing in the decisions by certain States vis-à-vis Occupied East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and Security Council resolutions [478 \(1980\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#).

Arguments that any action to seek accountability for Israel’s crimes and violations is “antisemitic” and/or undermines the peace process are unconvincing and detached from reality. Just this week, the Israeli Prime Minister, in yet another election frenzy, vowed yet again to legalize settler outposts if re-elected. This compels us to ask: which is a bigger threat to the two-State solution and the peace process, the pursuit of accountability under international law or the pursuit of creeping annexation?

It is time to effectively end the Security Council’s paralysis, which has allowed Israel’s occupation and de facto annexation to continue with impunity. Doing so would re-establish the framework of international law as the principled path to ending this historic injustice and would reassert the applicability of international law in the face of violations and breaches in any circumstances. With the aforementioned in

mind, the implementation of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in all of its provisions, becomes more imperative than ever, and we urge all States to uphold their obligations in this regard to ensure accountability for Israel's internationally unlawful acts, to protect the Palestinian civilian population under occupation and to salvage the prospects for a just and peaceful solution.

To conclude, we must recall that this week marks the eighteenth anniversary of the death of Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old American who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer while undertaking non-violent action to protect the home of a Palestinian family from demolition. Rachel's sacrifice and courage are unforgotten and her memory will always be honoured. In one of the last messages that she shared with her family, Rachel wrote: "I should at least mention that I am also discovering a degree of strength and of basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances – which I also haven't seen before. I think the word is dignity." We, the international community, must discover the degree of our collective strength in the face of such grave injustice through dignity.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 707 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 5 March 2021 ([A/ES-10/853-S/2021/224](#)) 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 present letter circulated 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**
Minister
Permanent Observer