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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 22 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

I am compelled to write again, mere days since my letter of 18 March, in the light of the ongoing escalation of tensions and deterioration of conditions due to the illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which continues to cause immense harm to the Palestinian civilian population in its rabid pursuit of the colonization and annexation of our land, all in grave breach of international law.

Israeli occupying forces continue to kill, injure and maim Palestinian civilians. On Friday, 19 March, a Palestinian man, Atef Yousef Hanaysha, aged 45, was shot in the head and killed by live fire from Israeli soldiers, who attacked anti-settlement protesters near the village of Bayt Dajan, east of Nablus, in the occupied West Bank. Atef leaves behind a wife and three children, in addition to his extended family, whose lives have been devastated by his loss.

Like many other Palestinian villagers, the residents of Bayt Dajan, civilians and unarmed, have been holding weekly protests in an attempt to defend their lands from the occupation and its unrelenting settlement expansion. Yet, the occupying forces persist in responding to any rightful opposition to Israel's theft of Palestinian land and dispossession of Palestinian families with lethal and criminal force, unconcerned by the possibility of accountability as a culture of impunity reigns.

Similar incidents also occurred on Friday in other areas of Occupied Palestine. In Ayn al-Bayda, near Yatta in the southern West Bank, Israeli soldiers physically assaulted civilians who had gathered for a weekly demonstration in solidarity with villagers whose lands are at risk of confiscation for settlement expansion. Three weeks ago, Israeli settler bulldozers levelled large tracts of farmland belonging to four families from Ayn al-Bayda. Several Palestinians were also beaten and injured by tear gas fired by occupation forces that accompanied Israeli settlers who raided Khan al-Laban, an Ottoman-era archaeological site in the village of Lubban al-Sharqiyah, south of Nablus, on Friday.



These attacks were preceded on 18 March by an assault on an entire family in a so-called “search and arrest operation” by occupying forces in the town of Bayt Ummar in the southern West Bank. Israeli soldiers raided the home of the Abu Mariah family and assaulted the father, his 50-year-old wife and two daughters, aged 27 and 21. Two sons of the same family are being held captive in Israeli prisons, one aged 17, who was detained in April of last year and sentenced to two years, and the other aged 26, who has been held in administrative detention without charge or trial since last May. Like so many other Palestinians, this family’s entire life has been dictated and devastated by the Israeli occupation. One must ask: what would their lives look like if this illegal, cruel occupation did not exist?

Simultaneous with these acts of aggression, which are directly linked to and the direct product of Israel’s illegal colonial settlement and annexation campaign, has been the continued demolition of Palestinian homes and the threat of further demolitions and evictions of Palestinian families in and around occupied East Jerusalem – a grave concern that we have raised in successive letters. As reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the month of February 2021 alone, the occupying Power demolished, forced people to demolish or seized 153 Palestinian properties, displacing 305 people, including 172 children, and affecting the livelihoods of 435 other people. Such escalation has included the deliberate targeting by Israel of humanitarian aid donated by the European Union, which has tripled compared with the monthly average documented in 2020. Here we recall the repeated – on five separate occasions – demolitions and confiscations of aid at Khirbat Humsah, including the destruction of shelters, water and sanitation facilities and livelihood structures, which have displaced at least 60 people, among them 35 children.

This escalation reflects a 65 per cent increase from the monthly average of demolitions in 2020. The pattern and intent is clear: the acquisition of more Palestinian territory, and, again, the line is very direct between demolitions and evictions and Israel’s colonization plans. Settlement expansion drives demolitions and the displacement of Palestinians as the occupation seeks to seize and annex as much Palestinian land with as few Palestinians as possible. This is known worldwide as ethnic cleansing.

In this regard, I highlight the urgent appeal, issued on 19 March by the Jerusalem Governate, for international action to stop Israel’s plans to forcibly evict more Palestinian families and demolish more Palestinian homes in the City. In addition to the threat looming over 37 Palestinian families in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods referenced in our letter of 18 March, the Jerusalem Governate cautions that eight more Palestinian families in Silwan and Isawiyah face the imminent threat of home demolition under the pretext of construction without a permit, having been ordered by the occupation to empty their homes of furniture and persons in preparation for demolition. Moreover, the Israeli occupying authorities are moving ahead with plans to demolish more than 100 homes in the Al-Bustan section of Silwan. If committed, this war crime would result in the forced displacement of at least 1,550 Palestinians, more than 60 per cent of them children.

Is this how peace is made: by destroying people’s homes, throwing them out into the streets and forcibly displacing them?

None of this is coincidental, but rather all part of a deliberate plan by Israel to force Palestinians – Muslims and Christians – out of occupied East Jerusalem and replace them with Israeli-Jewish settlers. It is also aimed at fragmenting the natural connection between Palestinian neighbourhoods in the City and severing the natural connection of the City with the rest of the Palestinian territory as part of attempts dating back to 1967 to assert Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, in flagrant violation

of international law and United Nations resolutions. Regrettably, the international community's appeasement has allowed for the gradual and constant implementation of these illegal schemes as Israel carries on without fear of any consequences.

We must therefore appeal once again to the international community to act with urgency to assume its responsibilities in line with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). We await the quarterly report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and we stress the need not only for articulation of the obligations of the occupying Power and States, but also for clear calls for respect and recommendations for action to be taken forthwith.

It is time to stop this blatant impunity that is causing so much harm and despair to the Palestinian people, destroying the prospects for a just solution and fuelling hate and conflict. It is time to work collectively to redress this injustice in a manner that ensures full respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and return, guarantees their equality and human dignity and achieves Palestinian-Israeli peace and security in accordance with the international consensus on two States with the pre-1967 borders, as has long been enshrined in United Nations resolutions.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 708 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 18 March 2021 ([A/ES-10/854-S/2021/273](#)) 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