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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 25 May 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 as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with incessant acts of violence and collective punishment against the Palestinian civilian population in Occupied Palestine, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, threatening yet another implosion of this volatile and grave situation.

Despite the “ceasefire” that came into effect on 21 May, Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers carry on with their provocations, incitement and attacks on Palestinian civilians and on holy sites in Jerusalem, including the Aqsa Mosque/the Haram al-Sharif; the detention, interrogation and arrest of Palestinians, including children, continue on both sides of the 1967 line; attempts to strip Palestinian families of their homes and ethnically cleanse them from Jerusalem persist, along with all other illegal colonization measures; the Israeli system of racial discrimination and apartheid against Palestinians remains in place; and the inhumane and illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip continues to be imposed in massive collective punishment of the 2 million Palestinians, all in grave breach of international law.

This is the reality facing the Palestinian people at this moment – before the ceasefire and after the ceasefire – tinged anew with grief and pain at the killing of so many innocent civilians, among them more than 70 children, and the wounding of thousands and the wanton destruction caused by Israel, the occupying Power, in just this latest onslaught on the occupied population. These crimes, perpetrated in a million ways, every single day by Israel, the occupying Power, constitute without a doubt war crimes and crimes against humanity and will continue to be the main factors of destabilization on the ground and of obstruction to any real calm necessary to enable action to resolve the root causes of this ongoing historic injustice.

More than 250 Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, were killed by Israeli occupying forces in the span of a two-week period. This is not just a number. These were human lives, and families have been devastated and forever traumatized and our society so deeply harmed and scarred. Carrying on



as though this is normal is not possible. Accountability must be pursued to ensure justice, including justice for the many, many victims of this illegal occupation's heinous crimes against our people.

The international community must act, and the Security Council bears particular responsibility in this regard. Its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations is clear, its resolutions are clear, the common obligations under international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, are clear. Once again, we reiterate: it is time to act to resolve the root causes of this perpetual instability and suffering – Israel's 73-year forced dispossession, displacement and oppression of the Palestinian people, violation of their most fundamental human rights, and colonization and annexation of their land. The Security Council has the tools to act and must do so forthwith to avert yet further deterioration, to save innocent lives and to salvage the prospects for a just peace.

The fact is that, since the ceasefire was agreed, Israel has persisted with incursions into the Aqsa Mosque/the Haram al-Sharif, intimidating and assaulting Muslim worshippers and provoking religious sentiments as it did throughout the entire holy month of Ramadan. It has not ceased the attempts to expel the Palestinian families of Sheikh Jarrah from their homes. Moreover, the so-called court of Israel presses on with expulsion cases against other families in the City, including two Palestinian families in the Batn al-Hawa area of Silwan. A decision is planned tomorrow, 26 May, as to the fate of these families, heightening tensions and fears of their forced displacement from homes that they have lived in for generations.

The Security Council must demand an end to all of these provocations and violations by Israel, the occupying Power, and its extremist settlers. It must demand respect by Israel for international law and for the Council's own resolutions, which have specifically addressed all such crimes, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and must act to compel respect by the occupying Power in case of continued non-compliance.

The international community, including the Security Council, also cannot dismiss or downplay the massive destruction caused by Israel throughout Gaza. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the latest Israeli aggression against Gaza has damaged or destroyed 17,000 residential and commercial units, displacing more than 75,000 Palestinians who sought refuge in 58 schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It is clear that, along with the illegal blockade, Israel's deliberate targeting of residential buildings and civilian infrastructure is designed to intensify the unimaginable suffering of more than 2 million Palestinians besieged by air, land and sea for 14 years.

Whether the target for bombing was a home or a hospital, a school or a media office, there is no denying that Israel's aggression aimed to terrorize the civilian population and exacerbate Gaza's humanitarian crisis. The crippling blockade, obliterated infrastructure, power shortages and hindered access for humanitarian aid have plunged Gaza into darkness, with limited access to water, food, medicine and electricity, and nearly every neighbourhood is strewn with rubble and the scars of this devastating, criminal onslaught.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 800,000 people in Gaza now do not have access to clean piped water, as nearly 50 per cent of the water network was damaged in 93 air strikes targeting water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. Israeli warplanes caused damage to six hospitals and 11 health-care centres, including Gaza's only coronavirus disease (COVID-19) testing laboratory, as well as damage to 53 educational facilities. Israel's bombardment also targeted energy grids and networks, deepening the electricity crisis of affected

hospitals that rely on such supplies for surgeries, incubators and other life-saving operations for thousands of injured patients.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the damage inflicted on Gaza in less than two weeks will take years, if not decades, to rebuild. The needs are immense, making ever more urgent the delivery of emergency aid without delay or obstruction by the occupying Power. This necessitates a clear message from the international community to Israel, the occupying Power, that it must abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and remove all impediments to humanitarian access to ensure the well-being and needs of the civilian population.

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel has only intensified its systematic pattern of arbitrary arrests and judicial harassment aimed at controlling the occupied Palestinian population, including children, through violence, repression and fear, including against peaceful demonstrators. Hundreds of Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line have been detained by the Israeli authorities in a blatant, racist and arbitrary arrest campaign.

Moreover, another raid by Israeli occupying forces was carried out at the Aqsa Mosque/the Haram al-Sharif on 21 May and, on 23 May, extremist Israeli settlers were escorted into the holy site by occupying forces, further provoking tensions in occupied East Jerusalem. As a result, six Palestinians were arrested and dozens of worshippers were beaten and assaulted by Israeli forces.

Israeli politicians and far-right, extremist settler groups also continue their incitement on news networks and social media, with constant calls for the storming of the Aqsa Mosque in the coming days and weeks. We appeal to the international community, including the Security Council, to heed our repeated warnings in this regard. Not only do such State-sponsored, extremist intrusions violate the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites, such actions inflame religious sensitivities and seek to stoke further violence throughout the City, risking a full-blown conflagration.

Here, we again recall Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), by which the Council unequivocally condemned “all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions”. Moreover, we reiterate the imperative of full respect for the historic and legal status quo at the Aqsa Mosque/the Haram al-Sharif and of Jordan’s custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

International law must be reaffirmed as a source of authority, without deliberate misinterpretation as a way to shield Israel’s systematic, deliberate and wanton impunity. Israel, like every other State, is not above the law. The appeasement must stop, and the law must universally apply. Holding it accountable for war crimes should not be politicized, but should rather be seen as fundamental for justice, the main pillar of peace.

The international community must act in the face of the grave injustice and human suffering that the Palestinian people continue to endure. The resolutions of the Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council are many. It is past high time to translate the words enshrined in those resolutions into action specifically aimed at serving accountability, deterring future crimes and violations against innocent civilians, and salvaging the prospects for the justice, peace and security that we collectively seek.

One cannot reflect on the latest aggression without thinking of the 66 Palestinian children buried beneath the rubble, and the plight of a generation of children who will

live with the trauma and loss enabled by ongoing silence and inaction by the primary global body responsible for ensuring peace and security for children worldwide. The Secretary-General, António Guterres, has warned: “If there is a hell on Earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza.” Inaction cannot be an option when the lives of children have become the Council’s ultimate moral test.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 721 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 21 May 2021 (A/ES-10/867-S/2021/493) 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

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