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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 4 June 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

On the eve of the date marking 54 years since the start of Israel's colonial, foreign occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and the passage of yet another year of its decades-long racist, apartheid system of oppression of the Palestinian people, I am compelled to draw attention to the ever-worsening and volatile situation on the ground absent accountability for this illegal occupation's crimes and absent a political horizon to bring it to an end.

It has been two weeks since a ceasefire halted the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and yet the occupation's violence continues as Israel's occupying forces and extremist settlers persist with countless human rights violations and war crimes against the Palestinian people.

In blatant contradiction of its claims to value the protection of civilians, Israel, the occupying Power, persists with its excessive and often lethal use of force against the unarmed, defenceless Palestinian civilian population under its occupation. On 28 May, Israeli occupation forces shot and killed a young Palestinian man, Zakaria Hamayel, aged 28, during an anti-settlement demonstration in the village of Beita, near Nablus. Over 20 Palestinians were injured when Israeli forces opened intense fire consisting of rubber-coated metal bullets on another recent non-violent demonstration. On 2 June, Fadi Washaha, aged 34, succumbed to wounds in the head inflicted by Israeli gunfire two weeks ago near Ramallah.

All evidence points to the fact that Israel's extrajudicial killings of Palestinians are not just arbitrary incidents, but rather part of a systematic pattern of policies designed to control the occupied population through violence, repression and fear. In a video widely shared on news networks and social media, on 26 May, Jana Kiswani, aged 16, was standing outside the front gate of her home in Sheikh Jarrah when occupying forces shot her in the back with a rubber-coated steel bullet. Right after shooting Jana, Israeli soldiers threw stun grenades into her home as she screamed in agony on the ground. Jana now suffers from a fractured spine and bruised lungs.



In the Gaza Strip, the aftermath of Israel's killing spree and wanton destruction in May continues to have grave humanitarian and psychosocial consequences for the Palestinian civilian population. Despite Israel's claims of "disengagement", its siege and 14-year land, air and sea blockade of Gaza, coupled with repeated military onslaughts, the latest being the fourth in the past 13 years, has inflicted unimaginable human suffering and insecurity, as this tiny strip of land and its people are attacked by Israel at will, starved of food, fuel, basic needs and even hospital supplies whenever the occupying Power so pleases.

As stressed by Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk: "This blockade has no meaningful security rationale. It inflicts great misery on the two million civilians in Gaza, while imposing little harm on any security targets. Israel remains the occupying power, and international law – including article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention – strictly forbids the use of collective punishment by the occupier."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this latest Israeli aggression on Gaza resulted in the killing of 278 Palestinians and the injury of 9,000, among them hundreds of children and women; 77,000 internally displaced persons, most seeking shelter in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools; and damage to 30 health facilities, among other civilian infrastructure. The WHO Head of Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Dr. Rik Peepkorn, has stressed: "Palestinians' lives are deteriorating; many people affected by the conflict are in urgent need of aid and face other health threats like COVID-19." We thus reiterate our appeals to the international community for urgent humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, including through support to United Nations agencies such as UNRWA, the United Nations Children's Fund, WHO, the World Food Programme and others. But we must also reiterate our calls for urgent action to bring an end to this illegal, inhumane Israeli blockade.

At the same time, we must once again draw attention to the continued confiscation of Palestinian homes, lands and properties, as Israel, the occupying Power, accelerates the forced transfer of Palestinians and its settlement colonization schemes, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem. It is beyond apparent by now that this is all part of a systematic, deliberate plan to remove Palestinians – i.e., ethnically cleanse these areas – in preparation for annexation in grave breach of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

While we have repeatedly appealed for urgent international action to deter Israel, continued inaction is emboldening its impunity. As a result, Israel has taken its colonization measures and collective punishment to new extremes before the world's eyes with no reaction: expansion of illegal settlements, mass dispossession, excessive use of lethal force, military aggression, widespread arbitrary arrest campaigns and repeated cycles of grave violations. Without consequences it is patently clear that these crimes will not stop.

Indeed, Israel, the occupying Power, said it would "suspend" its annexation schemes. But let's not fool ourselves. Even as the international community applauded the so-called suspension of annexation, Israel proceeded to advance measures for the integration of illegal settlements in preparation for full-fledged annexation. Israel's acceleration of settlement expansion is further proof of its annexationist aims to control a maximum of Palestinian land with a minimum of Palestinians.

Just last week, Israeli occupation authorities approved the construction of over 500 housing units in the so-called illegal "Mtsad" settlement. These illegal plans are part of Israel's relentless settlement campaign around occupied East Jerusalem, which

aims to cut off Bethlehem from its historical and geographical ties with the Holy City of Jerusalem through a cordon of illegal settlements and outposts.

Here we must again emphasize that Israel's illegal annexation plans, if allowed to proceed, will spell the demise of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders and result in a one-State apartheid reality, with all of the attendant consequences of such a catastrophic scenario.

Moreover, while Israel, the occupying Power, claims its two-tier system of separatism and inequality is non-existent, portraying itself as the "only democracy in the Middle East", the reality of its belligerent occupation on the ground contradicts this empty claim every single day as its draconian military laws are imposed on the Palestinian people with an iron fist to entrench this belligerent occupation and serve the needs of illegal Israeli settlers on our land.

This of course includes the continued repression of the Palestinian civilian population in occupied East Jerusalem as attempts persist to forcibly transfer hundreds of Palestinian families from their homes to make way for Israeli Jewish settlers as part of Israel's colonial annexation and Judaization plans for the City. Despite the "postponement" of court decisions regarding the fate of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan due to international pressure, State-sponsored settler encroachment in both neighbourhoods remains relentless and 150 Palestinian families, amounting to more than 1,200 individuals, remain under threat.

Entry to Sheikh Jarrah has been blockaded by concrete barriers erected by the Israeli occupying forces and there is an increased Israeli occupation forces presence aimed at restricting movement and prohibiting entry of anyone not residing in the neighbourhood, intimidating and preventing solidarity protests and support to the families there. In just one of the countless signs of this cynical, illegal and unrelenting repression, the Israeli occupation forces this week detained a 14-year-old Palestinian girl, Nufuz Hammad, for painting the Palestinian flag on the faces of her peers at an entertainment event for Palestinian children in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. As stressed by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, the Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, like so many others in occupied East Jerusalem, "live in the constant fear of being forcibly displaced and losing their homes. They are also traumatized by the increased violence by settlers in the presence of the Israeli Security Forces".

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".

In this past week, Israel has also continued the arrest and raid campaigns targeting its Palestinian citizens, further proof of its discrimination and oppression of Palestinians wherever they may be. More than 100 arrests per day have been made in the last week, with night raids regularly taking place in Palestinian communities that protested against Israel's aggression on Gaza, ethnic cleansing in occupied East Jerusalem and attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque. Documentation indicates that at least 91 per cent of those arrested in the recent unrest have been Palestinians, despite the fact that they were on the receiving end of the majority of the violent and racist attacks by Israeli extremists and gangs and police, most of whom are not facing any charges or arrests for their criminal brutality. These arrest and raid campaigns against are clearly "intended to intimidate and exact revenge on Palestinian citizens of Israel – 'to settle the score' with Palestinians, in the Israeli police's own words – for their

political positions and activities”, according to the Israeli non-governmental organization Adalah, which called the campaign “a militarized war”.

No country should be above the law: Israel must be held to the same laws and standards as every State. Faced with the reality of 54 years of this illegal, belligerent military occupation, the international community must come to the realization that words and commitments alone will not bring an end to this injustice. Despite more than 800 General Assembly resolutions and more than 80 Security Council resolutions, none have been respected by Israel. Israel has shown over and over that it will not comply with the law and that it will continue to act in contempt of the Security Council and the international consensus. The question that must be asked is: what is needed to remedy this situation?

What is needed now is action. The response to ongoing Israeli crimes and violations must be concrete measures to implement those resolutions and ensure accountability aimed at ending this historic injustice and the longest belligerent occupation in modern history, a crime against humanity that must not in any way be excused, appeased or supported and that must end. It is absolutely unacceptable that Israel be placed on a pedestal as if it is the only country on this planet with real and legitimate security concerns, while those exact same concerns of an occupied population and their very right to self-determination and freedom are ignored for the sake of the occupier’s well-being, contrary to international law and the entire international system’s credibility.

As the hard facts before us speak for themselves, we therefore call once again on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to uphold their responsibilities to confront this reality and act now to enforce international law, protect civilian lives and salvage the prospects for a just and peaceful solution.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 722 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 25 May 2021 ([A/ES-10/868-S/2021/499](#)) 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