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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 9 July 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 regret that I must once again draw your attention to the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to the escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power. Coupled with systematic human rights violations, the intensity of violent and racist attacks by Israeli occupying forces and mobs of extremists against Palestinian civilians continues to cause widespread human suffering and to aggravate an extremely volatile situation.

Since the beginning of the year, we have repeatedly cautioned the international community about intensifying Israeli attacks and human rights violations against the Palestinian people and urged action in line with legal obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. Yet, halfway through the year, even as the scope and scale of crimes and violations escalate, Israel's impunity rages unabated, and inaction and unaccountability remain the regrettable norm.

Whether conveyed by the State of Palestine or other responsible entities, the level of warnings in this year alone underscores the urgency of serious action to bring a halt to Israel's systematic breaches, including its rabid settlement colonization of our land. It is through such colonization that Israel has entrenched its illegal occupation and perpetuated its inhumane subjugation of our people, amounting to a regime of apartheid and exposing the fact that it has no intention whatsoever of ending this illegal situation, but is rather clearly preparing for full-fledged annexation of the Palestinian land and continued domination of the Palestinian people.

In this regard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, stressed in a statement issued today, 9 July, that the Israeli settlements are "the engine of Israel's 54-year-old occupation, the longest in the modern world". Underscoring the deleterious effect of the lack of accountability, he moreover stated: "It is a tragic paradox that, while the Israeli settlements are clearly prohibited by international law, the international community has been remarkably reluctant to enforce its own laws". But beyond



lamenting this unjust situation, the Special Rapporteur, like so many others, continues to rightly call for action to uphold international law and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in order to immediately address the critical situation on the ground and also to chart a path forward for a political horizon on which it will be possible to pursue a just and peaceful solution.

The dangers of this situation are illustrated in so many instances, including in the town of Bayta, near Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, which highlights Palestinians' daily struggle and resiliency against a criminal colonization enterprise that has no regard for their presence or rights. In Bayta, extremist Israeli settler groups established an illegal outpost on the town's mountaintop of Jabal Sbeih in May. Under the protection of Israeli occupation forces, settler extremist groups such as "Lehava", "La Familia", "Price Tag" and "Hilltop Youth" have intensified attacks on Bayta's lands and residents in a coordinated campaign to expand illegal settlements through continued expropriation of Palestinian land and facilitation of the establishment of settler-only roads, bypasses, tunnels and other essential infrastructure, cutting off Palestinian areas and further privileging the Israeli settlers illegally transferred to our land.

Most of the settler extremists in Bayta have come from nearby settlements and outposts, mainly from the so-called "Yitzhar" settlement, whose settler population is notoriously known for incitement and violence. Israeli occupation forces also persist with the lethal use of force against civilians protesting against the expropriation of Bayta's lands, with two teenagers being the latest victims: 16-year-old Mohammed Hamayel and 17-year-old Ahmed Bani-Shamsa. Since the start of anti-settlement protests in Bayta in May, Israeli occupation forces have killed six Palestinians and injured more than 700 Palestinians as Israel blatantly prepares to further colonize the Palestinian land and destroy its contiguity and diminish the Palestinian presence, as is being done in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem and elsewhere throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Yet, the villagers in Bayta and the surrounding area, like the rest of the Palestinian people, will not capitulate to the terror and oppression of the Israeli occupation forces and State-sponsored settler groups, and remain steadfast, protecting their land and demanding their rights. Settlers "temporarily" evacuated the illegal outpost as Bayta's residents have been determined, using non-violent means, to defend their lands and homes from ever-expanding and encroaching settlements. As settler groups "negotiate" with the Israeli Government on their unlawful return to Bayta, the brave residents of Bayta are entitled to and will continue to resist the settlement colonization of their lands, even if the Israeli army attempts to illegally seize the land under the pretext of establishing a so-called military "firing zone". We thus reiterate our long-standing call to the international community to act to bring an end to Israel's colonial settlement drive, for which Israel must be held fully accountable.

In this regard, we draw attention to the letter of 7 July signed by 130 European parliamentarians, warning about Israel's illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and urging support for the United Nations database of businesses involved in "activities facilitating a range of violations, including the appropriation of land, destruction of property, the unlawful exploitation of natural resources, and the construction of settlement units and associated infrastructure, all contributing to the maintenance and growth of Israel's settlement enterprise". Moreover, the parliamentarians stress that "through the settlement enterprise and Separation Wall, in which the contribution of business enterprises is vivid, Israel has established a situation of de facto annexation in the occupied West Bank, besides the annexation of occupied East Jerusalem". It is time

to stop making excuses for such criminal behaviour. Accountability is imperative; the international community has the tools for this, and it must act without delay.

In this connection, we must also draw attention to Israel's aggression yet again against Palestinian Bedouin families in Humsa Al Bqai'a, also known as Khirbat Humsah. On 7 July, Israeli occupation forces again dismantled and demolished homes and property in the community, insisting on its forced displacement in direct violation of the obligations of the occupying Power under international humanitarian law. This is the seventh time since November 2020 that Israeli occupation forces, equipped with heavy militarized machinery, destroyed the community, and the international community has yet to save it once from demolition or hold Israel accountable. As stressed by the Norwegian Refugee Council, "The international community must resolutely condemn this dispossession and show that it will not tolerate these brazen breaches of international law. The Israeli authorities must immediately grant humanitarian access to the community to meet their urgent needs".

As a result, 30 structures were demolished, mostly provided by the European Union as a humanitarian response following a previous mass demolition in February. According to the non-governmental organization West Bank Protection Consortium, 65 people, including 35 children, were again displaced and left with nowhere to go, in 102 degree Fahrenheit (39 degree Celsius) heat. As in so many other instances, Israel attempts to justify destruction of Humsa Al Bqai'a based on empty pretexts, including its unilateral designation of such areas as so-called "firing zones", all aimed at one objective: entrenching its control and occupation of the land.

Such repeated destruction of an entire community is explicitly intended to create an ever more coercive environment, facilitating greater control over Palestinian land, but without Palestinians, and further acceleration of the realization of Israel's illegal annexation schemes. As reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "so far in 2021, the Israeli authorities have demolished, seized or forced people to demolish at least 421 Palestinian-owned structures, including 130 donor-funded, displacing 592 people, including some 320 children across the West Bank". This has happened in the span of the first six months of the year only, before the eyes of the world and in the middle of a global pandemic, and yet there is no accountability.

At the same time, Palestinian families in the neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem remain at imminent risk of forced displacement and mass dispossession owing to the same illegal Israeli policies aimed at forcibly removing Palestinians from their homes and land and replacing them with Jewish settlers. This has been a known Israeli policy for decades and has been especially virulent in and around Jerusalem.

On 6 July, Israeli occupation forces destroyed a school in the Shu'fat refugee camp in occupied East Jerusalem under the pretext that it lacked an occupation-issued building permit. According to the Israeli non-governmental organization 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, Israeli occupation forces issued demolition orders against residential buildings in the Shu'fat refugee camp. If the demolitions are not halted, 10 Palestinian families comprising 55 people, including 25 children, will be displaced.

On 6 July, a Palestinian family in the Tur neighbourhood of East Jerusalem was forced to self-demolish its home to avoid the heavy demolition fees punitively imposed by the occupation. This is the second time that the Abu Ghannam family's home has been demolished; the first time was in 1994. On 8 July, Israeli occupation forces stormed Turmus'ayya, near Ramallah, and rigged the two-storey family home of Muntaser Shalabi, a Palestinian detainee in Israel, with explosives before blowing

it up into rubble in a punitive measure that amounts to collective punishment. Here we echo the call of the United States embassy: “the home of an entire family should not be demolished for the actions of one individual”. The international community must explicitly demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease such criminal action and abide by its legal obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying Power from imposing collective punishment on protected persons and their property.

In this connection, we must also draw attention to the ongoing and worsening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip. According to a joint assessment by the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank, the extent of physical damage caused by Israel’s latest aggression on Gaza ranges from \$290 million to \$380 million, exacerbating the already dire socioeconomic conditions being suffered by Gaza’s 2 million people as a result of repeated military aggression by Israel and its illegal 15-year blockade. As underlined in the recent report of the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council, “the Israeli-imposed blockade on Gaza contravenes international law, specifically article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and amounts to the collective punishment of the entire civilian population in Gaza”. We reiterate our calls for the full lifting of the land, air and sea blockade imposed on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and the imperative of unimpeded access to humanitarian needs and relief.

In this regard, we highlight the humanitarian recovery appeal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East calling for the provision of immediate assistance to meet the immense needs of the many Palestine refugee children, women and men in Gaza devastated by the Israeli military aggression, and reiterate our deep gratitude for the critical and tireless efforts of the many United Nations personnel and agencies assisting the Palestinian people.

Year after year, the international community issues statements on and condemnations of cycles of Israeli crimes and violations, yet falls short of translating words into action. Year after year, the United Nations as a whole adopts countless resolutions highlighting the gravity and many dangers of the continuation of this historic injustice, but falls short on implementation and accountability. Clearly, such cycles of inaction only fuel Israel’s impunity while undermining the credibility of international law and the United Nations system as a whole. People across the world are watching, and history is keeping account.

With the longest belligerent occupation in modern history having entered its fifty-fourth year, it is incumbent on the international community, particularly the Security Council, using the means and measures afforded by international law, to finally hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its violations and crimes against the Palestinian people. Despite the Security Council’s regrettable ongoing paralysis, States must uphold their obligations and commitments. In this regard, accountability is central for both ending this historic injustice and reasserting the applicability of international law in the face of violations and breaches. As affirmed in Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, “Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter”.

Like all occupiers of the past, Israel will come to realize that it cannot occupy and subjugate the Palestinian people indefinitely. Just like olive trees, our roots are deep and grow under harsh conditions. Just like Al-Ghadanfar Abu Atwan, the 28-year-old Palestinian man who went on hunger strike for 65 days in protest against his unlawful imprisonment without charge or trial by Israel, the Palestinian people will persist in their just and dignified struggle for self-determination, freedom and justice, as prominently enshrined in the Charter. Ghadanfar, meaning “lion” in Arabic,

amplifies the strength of the resilience of the Palestinian people in their quest to live in freedom, independence and dignity in their homeland, an inalienable right we will never forsake. We call upon the international community to uphold its obligations in respect of this inalienable right to help usher the more just, peaceful and secure future we seek and deserve.

This letter is in follow-up to our 725 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 28 June 2021 (A/ES-10/872-S/2021/611) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of those 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 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**
Minister, Permanent Observer
