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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 17 August 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 write once more to draw the international community's attention to the countless crimes that continue to be perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in Occupied Palestine. The Israeli occupying forces continue to assault and kill Palestinian civilians, including children, and the government continues its colonization and annexationist measures in our land, resulting in the systematic repression of our people and their collective punishment, dispossession, displacement and violation of their other most fundamental human rights.

As cautioned most recently in my letter of 6 August, the intensification of these grave crimes undeniably stems from Israel's impunity, which rages unabated as the dangerous combination of international inaction and unaccountability permit the longest belligerent occupation in modern history to oppress the Palestinian people, wherever they may be. The scale of Israel's violations is thoroughly documented, and yet there is no accountability, compounding this injustice with every passing day.

Yesterday, 16 August, Israeli occupying forces murdered four young Palestinian men. Soldiers raided Jenin city and refugee camp in the north of the occupied West Bank and killed in cold blood Raed Abu Seif, age 21, Saleh Ammar, age 19, Noor Jarrar, age 19, and Amjad Alazmi, age 20. The bodies of two of the victims, Noor and Amjad, were abducted by Israeli occupying forces, an inhumane practice by which the occupying Power seizes and withholds the bodies of Palestinians it has murdered and which constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Israeli non-governmental organization (NGO) Adalah reports that Israel is the only country in the world with such a systematic policy of confiscating human remains.

The lives of these young men have been taken and their families have been devastated like the thousands upon thousands before them, and yet there is no accountability. We mourn their loss and call on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act immediately to bring an end to the occupation's killing of



Palestinian civilians and its decades-old policy of necroviolence. Such repeated criminal assaults by the Israeli occupying forces on a defenceless civilian population compel our ongoing calls for international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law and underscore the necessity of investigation by the International Criminal Court as a legitimate means to ensure justice for the victims of this ruthless, illegal occupation.

Moreover, Israel's policy of forced displacement through home demolitions and destruction of property this week alone should be enough for the international community to act urgently to bring a halt to the brutality of colonialism and apartheid in Palestine, yet still there is no accountability. On 10 August, Israeli occupying forces stormed the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan and demolished a residential building, displacing 12 members of the Odeh family. At this moment, more than 700 Palestinians are at risk of large-scale displacement in Silwan alone as occupation authorities intensify their judiciary intimidation and attacks on Palestinian families in the Batan al-Hawa neighbourhood in order to forcibly remove Palestinians from their land and homes, only to be replaced by Jewish settlers.

The following day, 25 members of the Khader family became homeless after they were forced to self-demolish their own home in Beit Hanina, near Jerusalem, in order to avoid the heavy demolition fees punitively imposed by the Israeli occupation. Moreover, in coordination with Israeli occupying forces, settler groups repeatedly threatened to take over the home if the Khader family did not self-demolish. This is the third time that the Khader family has been forcibly displaced in 73 years. Their village of Beir Ma'in was destroyed by Zionist terror groups in 1948, forcing the family to seek refuge in Jerusalem. The family was displaced yet again in 1967 after Israel destroyed and ethnically cleansed the Moroccan Quarter in the Old City. Today, the Khader family has been forcibly displaced for the third time as Israel seeks to diminish the Palestinian presence in and around Jerusalem through the dismembering and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian cities, towns and villages.

Using the pretext that Palestinians lack occupation-issued building permits, Israeli occupying forces regularly carry out demolition campaigns deliberately aimed at altering the character, demographic composition and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and countless Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). Article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention expressly protects the occupied population against any institutional changes brought about by the occupying Power, including destruction of property, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, and annexation.

Yet, since the beginning of 2021 alone, Israel has demolished more than 80 Palestinian homes, buildings, and structures in occupied East Jerusalem. According to the 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 nearly 100 per cent rejection rate is an unlawful accessory used by Israel's judicial system to entrench the occupation in favour of illegal annexation and settlement expansion schemes, particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem.

The continuation of Israel's illegal settlement-annexation drive is also visible in its latest announcement of the construction of more than 2,000 illegal settlement units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In an attempt to legitimize the illegal settlement enterprise, the Israeli Prime Minister is aiming to advance the latest settlement expansion by retroactively approving 863 units in certain Palestinian villages. This scheme is a wolf in sheep's clothing, designed to whitewash the war crimes stemming from the aggressive and relentless growth of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Even if Israel, as the occupying Power, initiates

the rare approval of Palestinian construction and development, the expansion of a single settlement unit anywhere in occupied territory is illegal and constitutes a grave breach of international law.

In the past week home invasions, mass arrests and large-scale military raids have also intensified throughout the occupied West Bank. Unsurprisingly, these measures correlate with Israeli crimes in recent weeks as hundreds of Palestinians, including children, have been rounded up and detained in pre-dawn raids. As stressed in a joint report by three Israeli NGOs – Breaking the Silence, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, and Yesh Din: “These invasions repeatedly and seriously violate the dignity and privacy of Palestinian families and communities and have a harmful effect on the mental health of many. They are used as a significant and effective tool by the State of Israel to oppress Palestinians and increase control over them”. Home invasions by Israeli occupying forces are a gross violation of human rights and international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Israel is a signatory. Article 17 of the Covenant states that “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation”.

On 11 August, Israeli occupying forces raided various parts of the West Bank and detained dozens of Palestinians through a campaign of arbitrary arrests. The following day, Israeli occupying forces raided the village of Beita, near Nablus, and detained several activists who were peacefully protesting Israel’s confiscation and expropriation of the village’s lands. Beita has been the scene of weekly demonstrations after Israeli settlers built an outpost on the village’s mountaintop of Jabal Sbeih in order to expedite the expropriation of Palestinian land for settlement expansion. Such arrests are designed to suppress any human rights work that exposes the grave crimes and violations stemming from Israel’s 54-year colonial occupation.

In this regard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, has stressed in a statement issued on 11 August that “arrests and raids on the homes of Palestinian human right defenders form part of a wider crackdown against those defending the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”. We echo the call of the Special Rapporteur for putting an immediate end to the targeting of human rights defenders Farid Al-Atrash, a lawyer at the Independent Commission for Human Rights, and Salah Hamouri, who is at risk of having his permanent residency permit in Jerusalem revoked due to his work at Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, as well as others who face constant harassment and intimidation. Moreover, we echo the call for the instant release of three members of Health Work Committees who were arrested by Israeli Occupying Forces for providing health services to Palestinians living in remote areas of the occupied West Bank: Shatha Odeh, Juana Ruiz Sánchez, and Tayseer Abu Sharbak. According to the Special Rapporteur’s statement, the health of Ms. Odeh, who has underlying medical conditions and was denied access to necessary medication and clean clothes, is rapidly deteriorating while Ms. Sánchez is being held in solitary confinement.

At the same time, in the past week, the besieged Gaza Strip has been targeted by Israeli airstrikes that have caused damage to infrastructure in Beit Lahya, Jabalya, and Gaza City. Repeated bombardment by Israeli warplanes, coupled with 15 years of blockade, have 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 a result of the inhumane blockade and four military aggressions in less than 15 years, 90 per cent of children in Gaza suffer from severe anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, most families receive less than eight hours of electricity per day, freshwater

remains unsuitable for human consumption, and the unemployment rate is nearly 50 per cent – one of the highest in the world. We reiterate our calls for the full lifting of the Israeli blockade on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and the imperative of unimpeded access for humanitarian needs, relief and reconstruction.

Failure to ensure accountability will only continue to embolden Israel's contempt of international law, with grave repercussions for the Palestinian people who have endured generations of injustice. As the question of Palestine is the longest-standing item on the United Nations peace and security agenda, it is incumbent on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to give life to international law and accountability by going beyond repeated statements and condemnations and undertaking long overdue action for justice.

Business as usual in the United Nations has proved to be too costly, only fueling impunity at the cost of human lives and of a peaceful solution to the Palestine question and seriously damaging credibility of the United Nations and the very foundations of international law. Concrete action, including the pursuit of accountability, must be at the forefront of global efforts in order to safeguard both human lives and the rules-based order. The international community, particularly the Security Council, must utilize existing lawful countermeasures to deter further violations against the Palestinian people and grave breaches of international law.

Urgent and decisive international action should include, inter alia, closing markets to Israeli settlement products, imposing an arms embargo on the occupying Power, supporting the International Criminal Court in its examination of the situation in Palestine, prosecuting perpetrators of crimes, including through travel bans or asset freezes, and imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions until the occupying Power abides by the law. As Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk stressed, "the international community should review its extensive menu of sanctions and countermeasures to stem this march towards further illegality". Only accountability will compel Israel to end this ruthless, illegal occupation and respect international law and open the door to the possibility of peace, stability and coexistence.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 729 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 6 August 2021 (A/ES-10/876-S/2021/713) 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 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