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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-seventh year

Identical letters dated 11 January 2022 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

The new year in Occupied Palestine has, regrettably, begun discouragingly as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with its illegal policies and practices against the Palestinian people. Coupled with systematic human rights violations, the intensity of State-sponsored attacks by Israeli occupying forces and mobs of settler extremists are reaching unprecedented levels.

The lack of international accountability not only emboldens Israel to press on with its illegal colonization of our land and dispossession of our people, but facilitates such lawlessness as it continues to foster an environment of permissiveness and impunity. Day after day, year after year, letter after letter, the international community becomes more well-informed about the scale of suffering and oppression endured by the Palestinian people, yet remains unwilling to pursue any sort of accountability in the face of the longest belligerent occupation in modern history. Year after year, decade after decade, the Security Council has witnessed and documented grave violations of its own resolutions, yet fails to act in the face of such blatant non-compliance, contempt and impunity.

Yet, like every year, the Palestinian people still look to the international community, particularly the Security Council, to have the moral courage to break the cycle of inaction and to act concretely to uphold the rule of law and implement the resolutions of the United Nations. We thus once again appeal for meaningful action to be taken, in line with international law and without delay, to bring hope to the millions of people suffering from this grave injustice that another year will not be lost and that justice and peace are actually possible.

In blatant contradiction of its claims to value the protection of civilians, the intensity and cruelty of Israel's colonial policies to uproot Palestinians from their land, in 2021 alone, should have been enough for the international community to act urgently. However, action became ever more elusive in 2021, further fuelling Israel's impunity, as seen in the number of Palestinians killed, homes demolished, settlements



expanded, families displaced, settlers transferred, prisoners mistreated, resources exploited and freedoms violated.

2021 was the deadliest year in Palestine since the 2014 military aggression on Gaza, as Israel killed 324 Palestinians, including 86 children, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The drastic increase in the number of Palestinians killed last year illustrates that repeated condemnations that are never backed by serious action have green-lighted Israel to run roughshod over all norms, rules and rights, even the right to life, without a shred of concern for accountability.

In the blockaded Gaza Strip alone, Israel killed over 260 Palestinians, among them 66 children and 41 women, in fewer than 10 days of bombing and destroyed entire neighbourhoods with thousands of tons of explosives. The international community, particularly the Security Council, failed to uphold its mandate to maintain international peace and security and protect innocent civilian lives, as Palestinian mothers buried their babies and children buried their parents amid unfathomable trauma.

In 2021, Israel's campaign of home demolitions also reached unprecedented levels, as more than 850 Palestinian homes and structures were demolished – the highest number since 2016. Israel's displacement campaigns have left more than 1,100 Palestinians homeless, many at the mercy of the harsh winter elements, and violated innumerable human rights.

Continued inaction has green-lighted Israel's home demolition frenzy, telling Palestinian families that nothing will be done to stop their children from being thrown out of their homes in the middle of the night to make way for Israeli bulldozers to demolish their homes. Inaction and a lack of consequences have equally emboldened Israeli politicians and settlers to continue raiding Palestinian neighbourhoods, such as recently in Sheikh Jarrah in Occupied East Jerusalem, harassing, intimidating, threatening and outright terrorizing Palestinian families in their ongoing attempts to take over these areas.

Provocations, incitements and incursions also continue at Jerusalem's holy sites, including at Haram al-Sharif and at churches in the city by Israeli occupation forces and settler extremists, in violation of the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites. The occupying Power recklessly persists with such dangerous violations and attempts to undermine the authority of the Islamic Waqf, including by obstructing its restoration and maintenance work at the Aqsa Mosque, and to undermine Jordan's custodianship of Muslim and Christian holy sites in the city.

Further in this regard, we highlight a statement made on 8 January by the Patriarch of Jerusalem of the Greek Orthodox Church, Theophilos III, who, inter alia, stressed that: "Our presence in Jerusalem is under threat. Our churches are threatened by Israeli radical fringe groups. At the hands of these Zionist extremists the Christian community in Jerusalem is suffering greatly. Our brothers and sisters are the victims of hate crimes. Our churches are regularly desecrated and vandalized. Our clergy are subject to frequent intimidation."

As we have cautioned repeatedly, the false perception of "calm" and irresponsible attempts to put a band-aid on this injustice by so-called "shrinking the conflict" will not change the worsening reality of colonial occupation, oppression and apartheid that marks daily Palestinian life. The new year has already followed 2021's trajectory, as Israeli occupation forces and settler extremist mobs have intensified attacks and incitement against Palestinians in ongoing attempts to uproot them from their land, entrench the occupation, de facto annex the majority of the occupied West Bank, especially in and around Jerusalem, and obstruct the self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Despite repeated warnings of the rising dangers of coordinated State-sponsored attacks and incitement against Palestinian civilians by the Israeli occupation forces and settlers, settlers are more frequently invading Palestinian towns and villages, terrorizing and causing injury to civilians, destroying properties and vehicles, and setting fire to homes and fields. Whether in Beita or Burqa, Palestinians are using their own bodies to shield loved ones from settler attacks and raids by Israeli occupation forces, both of which are inextricably linked to the entrenchment of the occupation.

As the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has pointed out: “Israel benefits from the repercussions, as settler violence has gradually dispossessed Palestinians of more and more areas in the West Bank, paving the way for a state takeover of land and resources.” This is the engine for what B'Tselem has rightly identified as Israel’s aim of “geographically and demographically engineering space” to ensure its control and “Jewish supremacy” of all the land.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there were 427 settler attacks against Palestinians in the first 10 months of 2021, compared with 358 attacks in 2020 and 335 in 2019. The dangerous surge in settler violence has even sparked debate within the Israeli Government, as some politicians can no longer defend the barbarity of settlers and have described such attacks as “pogroms” waged by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities.

Premeditated car-ramming attacks committed by Israeli settlers also increased over the past year, with our most recent letter, dated 29 December 2021 ([A/ES-10/886-S/2021/1100](#)), containing details of a settler attack that killed a 63-year-old Palestinian woman, making her the fourth Palestinian killed by settler car-ramming attacks in 2021. On 6 January, the life of another victim was claimed. Mustafa Falaneh, aged 25 and father to an 18-month-old girl, was killed when an Israeli settler deliberately struck him with his car. Hours after Mustafa’s killing, another car-ramming attack occurred in Nablus when an Israeli settler ran over a 48-year-old Palestinian woman.

During a raid by Israeli occupation forces on the village of Umm al-Kheir near Al-Khalil (Hebron), on 5 January, an Israeli settler ran over 75-year-old Suleiman al-Hathalin, dragging his body for several metres, without stopping, before fleeing the scene. Referred to by locals as Hajj Suleiman, the 75-year-old is well-known for his non-violent activism and for the support he has extended to local communities facing settler attacks and forced displacement. Hajj Suleiman is currently in a critical condition and it is not certain if he will regain consciousness. Meanwhile, his attacker remains at large, as the culture of impunity that guarantees settlers protection for any and all attacks and incitement against Palestinians continues to prevail.

Here, we echo the call made by the Palestinian Foreign Ministry: “We consider the incidents of running over Palestinians, which have become a phenomenon that is repeated without any attention or follow-up by the occupation police or its various organs, crimes, whether intentional and deliberate or by negligence and indifference shown by the occupying police, even if they are ordinary traffic accidents involving a Palestinian. This situation confirms not only the racism of the occupying state in dealing with the Palestinians but also the absolute disregard for their lives as if they have no value.”

2021 also witnessed a broader scope and scale of Israeli attacks on civil society organizations in a systematic effort to conceal the occupation’s crimes against the Palestinian people. Such attacks included delegitimization and defamation campaigns, violent crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations and the repression of fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, opinion, association and assembly, all of which persist.

Just a day ago, Israeli occupation forces raided Birzeit University in Ramallah and arrested four students, before firing live ammunition at other students on campus. Unsurprisingly, Israeli occupation forces have once again brought violence to what should be a safe educational space, criminalizing students and student organizations. Israel's latest attack on academia in Palestine is an inherent feature of the Israeli occupation, aiming to shrink the space for our aspirations for freedom and justice, while silencing any and all advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian people.

In this regard, since the start of the year, dozens more Palestinians have been arrested and detained, adding to the nearly 5,000 Palestinians being illegally held in Israeli captivity, subjected to all forms of abuse and human rights violations. Among those recently arrested was Nour Ahmad Allami, a 16-year old boy suffering from heart and spinal diseases, who was cruelly beaten and detained by Israeli occupation forces on 8 January.

The timing of Israel's latest attack on Birzeit University is no coincidence given the intensity of the above-mentioned repression endured by Palestinian civil society organizations, students and non-violent resistance by citizens. Israel knows that the *sumud* of our people has deep roots in our universities, which are known for their resilience in the face of a belligerent occupation that has bombarded university buildings, assassinated professors and students, killed ordinary bystanders, jailed prominent academics, raided campuses and launched arbitrary arrest campaigns to unlawfully imprison thousands of students and faculty members in recent years.

Almost two weeks into 2022, the intensity of all these crimes and violations indicates that Israel could not care less about international law as it undertakes further draconian measures to entrench its 54-year colonial occupation and annexation schemes, with Jerusalem as the prime target. Despite the condemnations issued by the global community, Israel carries on with its plans to expand its illegal settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem, while simultaneously demolishing homes and displacing thousands of Palestinians to make way for yet another illegal settlement and a "religious theme park" for Jewish settlers.

As absurd as that may sound, that is the dark reality for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Jerusalem who live in a permanent state of insecurity and uncertainty regarding their future. We once 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".

Israel is fully aware that its repressive measures and false narrative are failing to conceal its crimes and violations. Instead, it suffices with profiting from the entrenched cycle of inaction and lack of accountability that permits it to intensify its illegal, belligerent occupation in broad daylight. We must therefore reiterate that "business as usual", including at the United Nations, has proven to be too costly and that action to reverse these negative trends and to implement international law is urgently needed. The time to act is long overdue, as the start of the year has already provided a clear picture of which path Israel has chosen to take, a dark path of continued colonial occupation, oppression and apartheid.

The international community cannot remain passive and accept this path. It must choose a path forward that ensures accountability and salvages the prospects for justice and peace. As recently stated by Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk: "The problem is not ignorance or lack of evidence – this is, after all, by far the best-documented conflict in the modern world – but the remarkable unwillingness of the

international community to act upon its own comprehensive rules-based framework for peace and self-determination by imposing accountability on the offending party. In the absence of dynamic international countermeasures, the present direction is clear: this occupation will not be dying of old age.”

We thus make another urgent appeal to the international community, in particular the Security Council, to act with urgency and seriousness at the start of another year to uphold the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon them under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the principles of humanity and morality, to bring an end to this tragic, grave and historic injustice.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 739 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 29 December 2021 (A/ES-10/886-S/2021/1100) 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