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PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and
intergovernmental organizations
relevant to the question of Palestine

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I. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

On 5 June 2017, the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following statement ([SG/SM/18554-PAL/2212](#)):

Today marks 50 years since the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians.

This occupation has imposed a heavy humanitarian and development burden on the Palestinian people. Among them are generation after generation of Palestinians who have been compelled to grow up and live in ever more crowded refugee camps, many in abject poverty, and with little or no prospect of a better life for their children.

The occupation has shaped the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. It has fuelled recurring cycles of violence and retribution. Its perpetuation is sending an unmistakable message to generations of Palestinians that their dream of statehood is destined to remain just that, a dream; and to Israelis that their desire for peace, security and regional recognition remains unattainable.

Ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-State outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty. It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Now is not the time to give up on this goal. Continued settlement construction and expansion; violence and incitement; and the illicit arms build-up and militant activity in Gaza risk creating a one-State reality that is incompatible with realizing the legitimate national and historic aspirations of both peoples. Now is the time to return to direct negotiations to resolve all final-status issues on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, agreements and international law.

Now is the time to end the conflict by establishing an independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remove a driver of violent extremism and terrorism in the Middle East and open the doors to cooperation, security, prosperity and human rights for all.

In 1947, on the basis of United Nations General Assembly resolution 181, the world recognized the two-State solution and called for the emergence of "independent Arab and Jewish States". On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was born. Almost seven decades later, the world still awaits the birth of an independent Palestinian State.

The Secretary-General reiterates his offer to work with all relevant stakeholders to support a genuine peace process.

II. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION

On 6 June 2017, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#):

This week marks 50 years since the start of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For humanitarians this is the most long-standing protection crisis in the UN's history.

It should be obvious, but it bears repeating, that Occupation is ugly. Living under foreign military rule for years on end, generates despair, suffocates initiative and leaves generations in a kind of political and economic limbo.

Israel's occupation is backed by force. Accompanying that ever-present security apparatus have been deliberate policies that have isolated Palestinian communities from each other, ruptured social cohesion, profoundly limited economic activity and deprived many of their basic rights – of movement, of expression, of access to health and much more. In too many cases, these policies have violated international humanitarian law as well as the human rights instruments to which Israel is a party.

One direct result of these policies has been the creation of chronic humanitarian needs among Palestinians. In 2017, nearly half of the 4.8 million Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) will need humanitarian aid of one kind or

another. Many of them require food assistance to compensate for lost livelihoods, others legal aid, and others still, will need water, healthcare or shelter. In a 'normal' year – ie. one without a conflict in Gaza – around US\$1 billion is allocated from scarce global resources to support the various humanitarian operations underway in the oPt.

Neither the occupation, nor its impact, is static of course. Coping mechanisms are increasingly depleted. The worst impacts are felt by those most vulnerable – children, single mothers, the elderly and disabled. And humanitarians themselves face increasing obstacles in their efforts to mitigate the impacts of occupation, whether it be in increased movement restrictions, the exhaustion of legal processes, the confiscation of our aid, or understandable donor fatigue. As each year passes, the situation deteriorates inexorably, with profound consequences for Palestinians and potentially Israelis as well. From a humanitarian's perspective, 50 years of occupation represents a gross failure of leadership by many – local and international, Israeli and Palestinian. Too many innocent civilians – Palestinian and Israeli alike – are paying for this abject failure to address the underlying causes of the world's longest-running protection crisis.

III. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES REPORT ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

On 12 June 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report entitled “Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: comprehensive review on the status of recommendations addressed to all parties since 2009”. The following are the follow-up measures contained in the report (A/HRC/35/19):

VI. Follow-up measures

63. The recommendations by human rights mechanisms and by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner show a general consensus on the measures that parties must take in order to further compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law: the ending of practices that continue to violate international law (such as the blockade, the construction of the wall and the expansion of settlements), and ensuring accountability for past violations, including war crimes.

64. Given the non-implementation of most recommendations on accountability, both sides are urged to intensify efforts to investigate all allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in line with international standards.

A. Israel

65. Israel bears primary responsibility for the implementation of recommendations addressed to it and is bound by international human rights law and international humanitarian law obligations, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.¹¹⁰

66. OHCHR has published *National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms*, on how a Government

can enhance its institutions to better engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms. OHCHR continues to stand ready to support Israel to fulfil the recommendations addressed to it.

67. The High Commissioner proposes that Israel make full use of OHCHR technical assistance to help with the implementation of the relevant recommendations, which includes the development of national mechanisms for reporting and following up on recommendations. The High Commissioner reminds Israel of its obligations under the international human rights instruments that it has ratified, and under the Geneva Conventions, to which it is a High Contracting Party, and calls on Israel to fully comply with them in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

68. The High Commissioner takes note of the preliminary examination launched by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in January 2015 into the situation in Palestine to establish whether the Rome Statute criteria for opening an investigation are met.¹ The High Commissioner is

¹ This followed the lodging by the Government of the State of Palestine of a declaration under article 12 (3) of the Rome Statute accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court "over alleged crimes committed 'in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014", and its accession to the Rome Statute in January 2015: see www.icc-cpi.int/palestine.

encouraged by Israel's dialogue with the Office of the Prosecutor.²

69. The High Commissioner notes the repeated failure to comply with the calls for accountability made by the entire human rights system and urges Israel to conduct prompt, impartial and independent investigations of all alleged violations of international human rights law and all allegations of international crimes. Furthermore, the High Commissioner calls upon Israel to ensure that all victims have access to remedies and reparation.

B. State of Palestine

70. The State of Palestine is bound by international human rights and international humanitarian law instruments and bears primary responsibility for the implementation of recommendations addressed to it. The cooperation of the State of Palestine with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court is encouraging.

71. The High Commissioner notes the State of Palestine's non-compliance with the calls for accountability and urges the State of Palestine to conduct prompt, impartial and independent investigations of all alleged violations of international human rights law and all allegations of international crimes. Furthermore, the High Commissioner calls upon the State of Palestine to ensure that all victims have access to remedies and reparation.

72. The cooperation by the State of Palestine with the human rights system provides scope for enhanced engagement for the implementation of recommendations. The OHCHR practical guide on national

mechanisms for reporting and follow-up provides concrete support on how to better engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms. OHCHR is encouraged that the State of Palestine is working towards the establishment of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up and stands ready to support the State of Palestine to fulfil the recommendations addressed to it.

73. The High Commissioner proposes that the State of Palestine make full use of the technical assistance available through OHCHR to help with the implementation of recommendations addressed to it, including the development of national mechanisms for reporting and following up on recommendations.

C. The international community

74. In 2004, the International Court of Justice concluded that all States had the obligation “not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem”³ and to ensure that any impediment to the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people was brought to an end. The Court also referred to the obligation of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law. In 2009, several special procedure mandate holders⁴ recalled the obligation of all States to cooperate “to bring to an end through lawful means” any serious breach of a peremptory norm of international law, and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. In his 2017

² See www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/OTP-PE-rep-2015-Eng.pdf. See also https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/161114-otp-rep-PE_ENG.pdf.

³ *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, p. 200.

⁴ See A/HRC/10/22, para. 105.

report,⁵ the Secretary-General recalls the illegality of settlements and the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and that measures that may amount to collective punishment, such as the blockade on Gaza, are contrary to international humanitarian law.

75. The High Commissioner suggests the Human Rights Council consider recommending to the General Assembly that it make use of its powers under Article 96 (a) of the Charter of the United Nations in order to specify how all parties can fulfil their obligations in implementing the recommendations reviewed in the present report.

76. The role of States and businesses in addressing the human rights impact of businesses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been the subject of increasing attention.⁶ Under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, “business enterprises should respect human rights. This means that they should avoid infringing on the human rights of others and should address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved” (principle 11). In 2014, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises stated in the context of Israeli settlements that “where an enterprise cannot effectively prevent or mitigate an adverse human rights impact ... it should consider whether its continued operation can be reconciled with its responsibility to respect human rights and act accordingly”.⁷ The Working Group also noted that: “States that are 'home State' of business enterprises operating in or connected with settlements in the OPT

should engage with such enterprises at the earliest possible stage to provide advice and guidance, and should make clear the State's policy in regard to the settlements.⁸

77. OHCHR stands ready to advise and support States, companies and relevant bodies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including in the context of Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

78. In 2004, the International Court of Justice emphasized “the urgent necessity for the United Nations as a whole to redouble its efforts to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continues to pose a threat to international peace and security, to a speedy conclusion”.⁹ However, successive rounds of hostilities, and ongoing violence and violations, including those linked to Israeli settlement expansion, show that the occupation and the conflict are deepening.

79. The Human Rights Up Front initiative¹⁰ and action plan are aimed at strengthening the ability of the United Nations to prevent and respond to serious human rights violations and complex crises. Human Rights Up Front cuts across the three indivisible pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development, and human rights. For the sustainable success of any negotiated political endeavour, it is imperative to bring the parties together in mutual recognition that respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law must be at the forefront of peace efforts.

80. The High Commissioner reiterates the calls to all States and to

⁵ See report on the human rights situation available from www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session34/Pages/ListReports.aspx.

⁶ See A/HRC/22/63 and A/HRC/34/39.

⁷ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Business/OPTStatement6June2014.pdf, p. 14.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, p. 200.

¹⁰ See www.un.org/sg/en/content/ban-ki-moon/human-rights-front-initiative.

relevant United Nations bodies to take all measures necessary to ensure full respect of and compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

81. All stakeholders must recognize that compliance with international law is a sine qua non condition for peace. Reports analysed in the present review indicate that

the general patterns of human rights violations and non-implementation of recommendations are not just symptoms of the conflict but further fuel the cycle of violence. To break this cycle, the root causes must be addressed: these include bringing the occupation to an end and addressing the security concerns of Israel. Creating the space for peace demands the recognition that respect for human rights is the path out of the conflict. This requires the political will and commitment of all stakeholders.

IV. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING UNRWA'S ESSENTIAL SERVICES

On 12 June 2017, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following statement ([SG/SM/18568-PAL2212](#)):

The Secretary-General is concerned about recent public criticism of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the integrity of its operations. He wishes to express his support for UNRWA and his admiration for the role it plays in delivering essential services and protecting the rights of millions of Palestine refugees across the Middle East.

UNRWA is mandated by the General Assembly, whose members have repeatedly acknowledged the Agency's unique contribution to peace and security in that

region. UNRWA operates in the front lines of difficult conflict situations and provides education for half a million refugee girls and boys, teaching them human rights and tolerance. Its education and relief activities contribute critically to stability in the region.

The Secretary-General calls on all Member States to continue their support to the Agency in order for UNRWA to be in a position to fulfil impartially and efficiently its essential role and to implement its humanitarian mandate to serve Palestinian refugees until a just and durable solution to their situation is found.

V. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR WARNS OF THE RAPIDLY DETERIORATING HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN GAZA

On 14 June 2017, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#):

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, Robert Piper, warned today about the disastrous consequences of a further reduction in electricity-supply to the Gaza Strip on the living conditions of two million Palestinians.

He called upon the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Israel to put the welfare of Gaza's residents first and to take the necessary measures to avoid further suffering. The UN has already appealed to the international community to support its

limited humanitarian efforts to prevent the collapse of vital life-saving, health, water, sanitation and municipal services.

Early this week, the Israeli cabinet agreed to a reduction in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip, following a decision by the Palestinian Authority to reduce its monthly payments for that supply by 30 per cent.

If, as a result of the Palestinian Authority's instructions, this decision is implemented the situation will become catastrophic. The reduction will bring most households and service-providers down to 2 hours or so of power per day.

Hospitals, water supply, waste water treatment and sanitation services have already been dramatically curtailed since mid-April and depend almost exclusively on a UN emergency fuel operation. An additional reduction in electricity will require the delivery of one million litres of fuel monthly, under the UN operation, to keep minimum functions operating at 186 essential facilities across the Strip.

“A further increase in the length of blackouts is likely to lead to a total collapse of basic services, including critical functions in the health, water and sanitation sectors,” Mr. Piper said. “The people in Gaza should not be held hostage to this longstanding internal Palestinian dispute,” he added.

VI. UN AND GOVERNMENT OF PALESTINE SIGN NEW UN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR 2018-2022

On 15 June 2017, the office United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, issued the following [press release](#):

In the presence of H.E. Prime Minister Rami Al Hamdallah, and representatives of various ministries, and United Nations Agencies, the United Nations and the Government of Palestine today signed the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the occupied Palestinian territory, covering the period 2018-2022.

The UNDAF lays-out the common plans and strategies of all 21 agencies of the UN Development Group working in oPt over the coming five years. The overarching goal of the US\$1.3 billion 5-year strategy is “*to enhance development prospects for the people of Palestine, by advancing Palestinian statehood, transparent and effective institutions, and by addressing key drivers of vulnerability*”. In order to achieve this goal, the UNDAF is configured around projects in four core programming areas: (1)

Supporting Palestine's path to independence; (2) Supporting access to accountable, effective and responsive democratic governance; (3) Supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development; and (4) Promoting social development and protection.

The new UNDAF for oPt was inspired by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030, unanimously adopted by all 193 Member States of the UN at the General Assembly in September 2015, which ushered-in a world-wide effort to promote development that “leaves no-one behind”. A [detailed analysis of various disadvantaged and especially-vulnerability groups in the oPt](#) undertaken by the UN team, lay the foundations for the new UNDAF. The strategy is also closely aligned to the Government's new National Policy Agenda for the period 2017 to 2022.

UN Resident Coordinator, Robert Piper, reiterated the commitment of the UN to working with the Government, civil society and other development partners, to improve the lives of all people in the oPt, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals here; “The UNDAF reflects a shared commitment by the UN and the Government to work hand-in-hand to address some of the most sensitive and intractable development challenges faced by the 4.8 million residents of the occupied Palestinian territory”. With the signing of the UNDAF today, he noted, “our partnership to address national development priorities moves to the next level”.

The ceremony was held at the Prime Minister’s Office in Ramallah and was attended by H.E. Prime Minister Rami Al Hamdallah; H.E. Ibrahim Al-Shaer, Minister of Social Development, the UN Resident Coordinator, Robert Piper, and the heads of UN agencies resident in oPt.

The UN agencies which are signatory to the new UN Development Assistance Framework are the following: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Trade Centre, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Habitat, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations Volunteers, United Nations Women, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, and United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Implementation of the strategy will begin on 1 January 2018.

VII. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WARNS THAT GAZA POWER CUTS WILL SPARK HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The following is a [press release](#) released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 15 June 2017:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is deteriorating to unprecedented levels as new reductions in the already extremely limited power supply have been announced, a United Nations expert has warned.

Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said the situation was “extremely distressing” and getting worse with every passing week.

“All the parties with a direct hand in the crisis – Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas – must act immediately with the best

interests of the population in Gaza in mind to resolve this human-made problem,” the expert said.

“I call on them to put aside their differences, live up to their legal and political obligations, and to ensure that electricity needs are fully met, with immediate critical infrastructure requirements addressed,” he said. “This unprecedented reduction of power is increasing the already intolerable levels of misery being endured by Gazans, particularly for the poor and vulnerable.”

The power plant, which provides 30% of Gaza's electricity, has been inoperative since mid-April, partly because of a dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas over the payment of fuel taxes. Some extra power has been provided by Egypt and Israel, but Mr. Lynk said this was extremely limited, either because of insufficient infrastructure or for political reasons.

He also noted that the plant was badly damaged by Israeli military action in 2014, and that Israel had restricted the importation of replacement parts.

"This entirely avoidable power crisis has had significant repercussions for people living in Gaza," said the Special Rapporteur.

"The health sector is able to provide only the absolute minimum standard of care – hospitals are being forced to cancel some operations, are cutting back on maintenance, and are dependent on the United Nations for emergency fuel to run their generators," Mr. Lynk said.

"Raw sewage cannot be treated and is pouring into the Mediterranean. Desalination plants are functioning at one-seventh of their capacity, and drinking water is becoming increasingly scarce," he stressed.

The Special Rapporteur warned almost every aspect of daily life was now being affected.

"For the vast majority of Gazans, the power crisis intensifies the already serious humanitarian crisis," he said. "There is a severe impact on sanitation, food preservation, cooking, and the use of computers and telephones.

"The cost of food is dramatically rising. Irrigation for farming is restricted. Manufacturing companies are closing or

reducing their production hours. Unemployment – already the highest in the world at 40% – is increasing."

Mr. Lynk said the problems were compounding the already-degraded living conditions in the territory.

"Even before these current hardships, Gaza has endured a decade-long blockade and closure imposed by Israel, with the economy collapsing and poverty and unemployment rates soaring," he said. "This new energy crisis has made a very bad situation much worse."

Beyond resolving the immediate power supply crisis, Mr. Lynk also called for an end to Israel's economic blockade of Gaza, with security guarantees for both Israelis and Palestinians.

"Keeping Gaza economically crippled and socially isolated is a recipe for humanitarian distress and another conflict in the near future," he said. "The rights of all people to freedom and security must be respected in order to achieve peace."

In 2016, the UN Human Rights Council designated Mr. Michael Lynk (Canada) as the seventh Special Rapporteur on the [situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967](#). The mandate was originally established in 1993 by the then UN Commission on Human Rights. As a Special Rapporteur, Mr. Lynk is part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are

not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any

government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

VIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CONDEMNS TERRORIST ATTACK BY PALESTINIAN ASSAILANTS IN JERUSALEM

On 17 June 2017, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following statement:

“I condemn yesterday’s shooting and stabbing attack by Palestinian assailants in the vicinity of the Old City of Jerusalem in which one Israeli Border Police officer was killed and at least four others, including civilians, were injured.

Such terrorist acts must be clearly condemned by all. I am appalled that once again some find it appropriate to justify such attacks as “heroic”. They are unacceptable and seek to drag everyone into a new cycle of violence.”

My thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims, and I wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

IX. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 2334, MIDEAST SITUATION

On 20 June 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from his briefing ([S/PV.7977](#)):

Today I devote my regular briefing to the Security Council to reporting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the implementation of resolution [2334](#) (2016) during the period from 25 March to 19 June. I will focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance peace.

anniversary of the Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan. Achieving a negotiated two-State outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that is based on Israeli security needs and the Palestinian right to sovereignty and statehood. Now is not the time to give up on that goal. Now is the time to create the conditions for a return to negotiations so as to resolve all final-status issues based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, mutual agreements and international law.

Let me once again note that nothing in the report can be divorced from the broader context in which it is occurring — the half century of occupation, the stalled peace process, the lack of dialogue between the parties, as well as the continued illegal settlement activities, terror, violence and increased radicalization.

Resolution [2334](#) (2016), in paragraph 2, calls on Israel to take steps to

Allow me to note that this month’s briefing coincides with the fiftieth

“cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem”.

No such steps were taken during the reporting period. In fact, since 24 March there has been a substantial increase in settlement-related announcements as compared with the previous reporting period, with plans for nearly 4,000 housing units moving forward and 2,000 tenders issued. The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law. Resolution 2334 (2016) states that the international community will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties themselves through negotiations.

Plans for approximately 3,200 units were advanced through the various stages of the planning process in 22 settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank. Those plans include 2,000 housing units in the major population centres of Ma'ale Adumim and Ariel, and over 800 units in Kerem Reim, Oranit and Beit El. One hundred units were advanced for the new settlement of Amihai, established in the eastern Shiloh Valley for the former residents of the Amona outpost, where the Israeli authorities also declared 241 acres as State land in the same zone. Both acts would further sever the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State, thereby solidifying a line of settlements dividing the northern and central West Bank. As construction on the new settlement began today, the Prime Minister stated that

“There will never be a Government that is more pro-settlement than our Government”.

Separately, tenders were issued for close to 2,000 housing units in four settlements close to the 1967 line — Alfei Menashe, Beitar Illit, Beit Arie and Kamer Shomron. Infrastructure tenders for the future construction of more than 200 settlement units in Kochav Yaakov, located between

Ramallah and Jerusalem, were also re-issued. In East Jerusalem 770 housing units in the Gilo southern slopes reached the final approval stage, and building permits for more than 360 housing units were granted in Ramat Shlomo, Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramot.

Meanwhile, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the reporting period witnessed a sharp decline in the number of demolished Palestinian-owned structures in Area C. Twenty-nine structures were demolished or seized — down from 149 in the previous reporting period. East Jerusalem saw a less pronounced decrease in demolished structures, from 49 to 32. However, the monthly average of demolitions in East Jerusalem since the beginning of 2017 remains at the same level as in 2016, when demolitions reached a 15-year record.

Allow me to turn to the problem of violence, which remains a hallmark of the conflict. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on all sides to refrain from such acts and undertake efforts to combat them. During the reporting period, the security situation on the ground remained relatively calm. No rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel, and the Israeli Defence Forces did not conduct any air strikes in Gaza.

However, according to OCHA, 17 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in various incidents, including reported terror attacks, clashes and military operations. One Israeli soldier was killed in a car-ramming attack on 6 April outside the Ofra settlement, to the north-east of Ramallah, and, on 16 June a policewoman was killed in a shooting and stabbing attack by Palestinian assailants in the vicinity of the Old City of Jerusalem. On 14 April, a British exchange student was killed by a Palestinian assailant in a stabbing attack in Jerusalem.

The Israeli security forces killed a Jordanian citizen reportedly involved in a stabbing incident in the Old City on 13 May, and a Palestinian fisherman off the coast of Gaza on 25 May. The reporting period also witnessed the shooting of two Palestinian men during protests at the fence along Gaza's northern border.

On 24 March, a senior Hamas military commander was assassinated by unknown assailants in Gaza City. That was followed by a lockdown of Gaza by Hamas in which the de facto authorities did not allow Palestinians or internationals to leave the Strip for several days. In April, Hamas executed six Palestinian men for alleged collaboration with Israel — an act that was condemned by the international community.

Settler-related violence continued during the reporting period, as well. According to OCHA, 31 incidents were documented, resulting in one Palestinian killed, 10 injured and damage to Palestinian property. Much of the violence has centred around the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar near Nablus — a recurrent source of violent actions against neighbouring villages in the past. Against the backdrop of Israeli security officials reportedly warning of the increased risk of another terror attack by Jewish extremists, like the one against the Dawabsheh family two years ago, a Rabbi from Yitzhar was indicted for incitement to violence against Palestinians, while a number of others were arrested.

In paragraph 7 of resolution [2334](#) (2016), the Council called on both parties

“to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric”

and, in paragraph 6,

“to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism”.

Regrettably, such calls continued to go unanswered during the reporting period. Palestinian officials and media outlets affiliated with Fatah continued to commemorate the lives of perpetrators of past terror attacks against Israeli civilians. One community centre was recently named after a Palestinian woman who was involved in an attack in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were killed in Tel Aviv in 1978. UN-Women and Norway withdrew support from the organization.

Hamas leaders have also continued their deplorable practice of celebrating recent attacks against Israeli civilians as heroic, including the 1 April stabbing in Jerusalem's Old City in which two civilians were injured, and only a few hours following the complex attack at Damascus Gate last Friday, in which a policewoman was killed, Hamas was quick to praise “the three martyrs from today's heroic Jerusalem operation”.

Some Israeli officials have also employed provocative rhetoric. Politicians have repeatedly declared that there will never be a Palestinian State, while pledging to take the idea of statehood “off the agenda”. In a regrettable incident, an Israeli Minister spoke at an event attended by other members of the Knesset, celebrating the publication of a book promoting abhorrent views concerning Israel's Arab citizens. The book was condemned by the Anti-Defamation League as dangerous and inhumane, and a number of the participants expressed regret at their attendance.

Resolution [2334](#) (2016) reiterated the call by the Middle East Quartet on both parties to take affirmative steps to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. In May, Israel approved a number of positive measures to improve the Palestinian

economy. Those included the 24-hour opening of the Allenby Bridge for a three-month period effective as of today, as well as extended operating hours at the Tarkumiya, Ephraim, Gilboa, Maccabim and Reihan crossing points and the construction of a vehicular crossing point at Eyal. Furthermore, the package envisions the development of an industrial zone that includes bonded warehouses and a natural gas and fuel terminal aimed, at enhancing Palestinian authority over trade and customs issues.

The measures also included the demarcation of approximately 4,000 acres of land in Area C, including next to three major Palestinian cities — Ramallah, Nablus and Tulkarem — in which the regulation of planning and zoning will undergo changes with potentially positive implications for Palestinian development.

The Palestinian and Israeli Finance Ministries held a number of meetings to discuss fiscal leakages, which is a critical issue given the Palestinian Authority's \$800 million-financing gap. The parties have progressed in discussions on value-added tax clearance revenues. In early June, in accordance with the electricity agreement signed in September, Israel transferred \$30 million to the Palestinian Authority in lieu of equalization levies and health stamps, and agreed to conduct monthly transfers in the future. In May, the Joint Water Committee held its first meeting in seven years.

During the reporting period, the situation in Gaza heightened intra-Palestinian tensions, thereby creating an increasingly dangerous humanitarian situation and raising serious concerns about the prospects of another conflict. By establishing an administrative committee to run civilian affairs, Hamas tightened its control of Gaza and further antagonized the legitimate

Palestinian authorities, reducing the prospects for reconciliation. Meanwhile, a stand-off between Fatah and Hamas over the payment of taxes on fuel led to the shut down of the only power plant in Gaza, leaving residents with four hours of electricity per day. Basic services, including health facilities, water supply and wastewater management have almost ground to a halt, increasing the risk of health and environmental disasters. Today Gaza depends exclusively on Israeli electricity lines, which normally provide 60 per cent of supply, on Egypt and on a United Nations-managed emergency fuel operation that, given the funding available, will expire in two to three months.

On 15 May, the Palestinian Authority informed Israel that it would reduce its payment for the electricity supplied to Gaza by 30 per cent. One month later, Israel agreed to the Palestinian request. An initial 5 per cent reduction was implemented on 19 June, and further cuts are expected to have catastrophic consequences for Gaza's population.

Going beyond the scope of today's report on the implementation of resolution [2334](#) (2016), once again, I would like to warn all parties that Gaza is a tinderbox. If and when it explodes, it will have devastating consequences for the population and derail all efforts at advancing peace. Two million Palestinians in Gaza can no longer be held hostage by divisions. They have lived under the control of Hamas for a decade. They have had to deal with crippling Israeli closures, Palestinian divisions and have lived through three devastating conflicts. Perpetuating that situation breeds radicalism and extremism. We have a collective responsibility to prevent that situation; we have a duty to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

Returning to resolution [2334](#) (2016), during the reporting period there were no developments related to Member States' distinguishing, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967. There were, however, continuing efforts by the international community to advance peace.

On 29 March in Jordan, at the Summit of the League of Arab States, Arab leaders committed to relaunching serious peace negotiations on the basis of a two-State solution, establishing a Palestinian State “on the lines of June 4, 1967 with its capital in East Jerusalem” and reaffirmed their commitment to the 2002 [Arab Peace Initiative](#). In May, on his first trip abroad, United States President Trump visited Israeli and Palestinian leaders and made clear that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is critical to combating the threat of violent extremism and terrorism. He expressed his personal commitment to helping both sides achieve a peace agreement that would begin the process of peace throughout the region. The Secretary-General looks forward to working with the United States, Russia, the European Union and regional partners towards improving the environment for peacemaking, including by engaging with all sides to improve the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations on the reporting period.

First, once again, I must stress the urgency of addressing the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza. We must acknowledge the significant budget constraints the Palestinian Authority is currently facing and the need to support the Government in addressing them. However, all decisions must be taken with due consideration of their humanitarian impact. I therefore call on Palestinian leaders to

urgently reach the necessary compromises that will return Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities. Last month, I warned the Security Council that the crisis was leading us towards another conflict — a conflict that no one wants. I urge all parties to act before it is too late.

Secondly, the policy of continued illegal settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory contravenes resolution [2334](#) (2016). The large number of settlement-related activities documented during the reporting period undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution.

Thirdly, the continuing terror attacks, violence and incitement remain a very serious concern to all. Leaders have a responsibility to implement measures demonstrating their commitment to combating violence and any acts of provocation and inflammatory rhetoric.

Fourthly, while Israeli initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy are positive steps forward, it remains to be seen whether or not they will significantly increase Palestinian civil authority, in line with [Quartet recommendations](#) and prior commitments between the parties.

In this symbolic month, it is time to turn the challenges of the past into opportunities for the future. As the Secretary-General recently stated,

“The occupation has shaped the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. It has fuelled recurring cycles of violence and retribution. Its perpetuation is sending an unmistakable message to generations of Palestinians that their dream of statehood is destined to remain just that, a dream; and to Israelis that

their desire for peace, security and regional recognition remains unattainable”.

Every day that passes without peace is another day we neglect our collective responsibility to advance a meaningful

X. WFP REPORT SAYS THAT HALF OF GAZA HOUSEHOLDS FOOD INSECURE

On 21 June 2017, the World Food Program issued a [report](#) entitled “Market Assessment in the Gaza Strip”. The following is the executive summary:

In the besieged Gaza Strip, almost 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and almost half of households are food insecure. UNRWA and WFP assist more than 1.2 million people with some type of food aid: 93 percent receive in-kind food, 6 percent benefit from value-based electronic food vouchers and 1 percent receive both wheat flour and vouchers. Against this backdrop, **this report investigates the functionality of the food commodity market in the Gaza Strip** to understand whether it is generally conducive to a significant scale-up of cash-based transfer (CBT) interventions. The analysis is based on secondary data as well as primary data collected in November/December 2016 by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) through a trader survey of 859 food shops. The analysis is complemented with qualitative data and information obtained during semi-structured interviews with main stakeholders and partners conducted in January 2017 in the Gaza Strip by the authors of the report.

The overall analysis of the macro-economic environment clearly shows how **Gazan socio-economic development struggles with a dismantled productive sector**. The positive but shy performance of the economy in 2015 and 2016 has not been enough to improve the living conditions of a growing population: the level of real GDP

strategy towards a negotiated two-State solution that meets the national and historic aspirations of both peoples. The United Nations will continue its determined engagement with the parties and all key stakeholders to achieve that objective.

per capita has not yet returned to pre-blockade levels. Gaza is experiencing one of the highest unemployment rates in the world — 42 percent — and 54 percent of the working age population is outside the labour force.

Israeli restrictions and the blockade have curtailed the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, historically considered the backbone of the local economy. The agricultural sector suffers from reduced access to arable land, the rising cost of agricultural inputs and export restrictions. The fishing industry is confronted with water contamination and a fishing area that measures just 6 nautical miles. The high cost of inputs and low productivity also threaten the livestock sector and consequently weaken the Gazan dairy sector, which also struggles to compete with imported products that are diversified and of better quality. Today, local dairy production covers In the besieged Gaza Strip, almost 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and almost half of households are food insecure. UNRWA and WFP assist more than 1.2n million people with some type of fjust 20 to 30 percent of total annual needs. Finally, although reliant on imported wheat grain, the milling sector has the potential to satisfy Gaza's needs entirely; however, it is working at only 40 percent of its full capacity because the large inflow of flour in the form

of food aid suppresses demand for commercial wheat flour.

The constraints on the productive sectors mean **the Gaza Strip is heavily dependent on imports**. However, the inflow of goods is strictly controlled by Israel and is permitted through one single border crossing point. At the same time, Israel has been severely restricting Gazan exports; thus, Gaza has been running a persistent and increasing trade deficit as its exports — worth US\$4 million — are able to finance just 0.6 percent of its imports. **Gaza's trade dependency is not only the consequence of a higher volume of trade in relation to its economy, but also the result of its high trade partner concentration:** 68 percent of imports (in metric tons) come from Israel. Finally, the Israeli shekel is the main currency in use. Thus, the economic and political dependence on Israel is overwhelming.

Despite the high trade deficit, **the food imported in 2016 was not enough to meet the needs of the Gazan population**. A lack of reliable data on local food production and food manufacturing as well as difficulties in estimating the goods that come through illegal tunnels make it difficult to gauge the real food deficit/surplus. This report shows that local production of the milling sector may have been enough to fill the gap. However, analysis of the daily movement of trucks in and out of Gaza shows that the actual number crossing Kerem Shalom has never reached the limit set by Israel, i.e. 700 trucks/day; the flow only came close to the limit on a few days of the last quarter of 2016. Thus, this would appear to confirm the opinion of traders interviewed for whom **the constraint is not the border but rather low demand**. The results from the survey show that the high unemployment rate and poor economic conditions of households are holding back sales and that reduced credit is

playing an important role in the drop in sales seen over the past six months. Nevertheless, the complex procedures at the crossing may cause delays, which could also explain the low number of trucks crossing each day.

Other than the general deflationary pressure in the State of Palestine and Israel, low household purchasing power coupled with the large presence of food aid, the likely increase in illegal imports from Egypt and the cancellation of the exclusive-agent deal are pushing food prices down in the Gaza Strip. In 2016, Gazan yearly inflation averaged at -0.8 percent, driven down by a significant fall in prices for medical care (-2.9 percent) and food (-2.7 percent). **Average prices for many staple foods have been significantly low in the Gaza Strip** compared with prices in the West Bank (rice and oil being the exceptions). However, the benefits of low prices are threatened by uncertainty. In fact, for almost all staples, **monthly price volatility is a bigger concern in the Gaza Strip** than in the West Bank, and volatility has been increasing over the past two years. In this context, the WFP procedure of setting ceiling prices for the foods included in the voucher programme in combination with a lack of free shop choice is likely to harm beneficiaries, as traders may not have enough incentive to lower prices or offer discounts.

An examination of the **supply chain** reveals the importance of importers, not just because of Gaza's trade dependency. **Importers also play an important role in distribution**. In particular, importers dealing with chilled foods deliver direct to retailers. This is mainly because wholesalers lack refrigerator capacity, but also because importers prefer to deal with multiple shops rather than a few wholesalers to mitigate credit default risks. Households across the Strip rely on 4,700 retailers, which is about

one shop for every 70 households. In general, these are small shops with no other branches, and only a quarter of them have a warehouse. Generally, **shops face no major supply problems:** only 28 percent reported encountering difficulties. However, during the 2014 war, half of the shops did face problems and their stocks fell by an average 53 percent.

Local markets play an important and growing role for the humanitarian sector. **A conspicuous proportion of humanitarian aid is already absorbed/provided by the Gazan private sector:** in 2016, UNRWA procured 47 percent of the food needed for in-kind distribution in the local market; for WFP, the share was 62 percent. The agencies still had to import around 73,000 mt of food to satisfy their operational needs— less than 18 percent of the food entering the Gaza Strip through the commercial sector. A large part of the food imported was wheat flour (46,000 mt), even though **local mills have the potential capacity to completely cover the UN food distribution needs.** If wheat flour is excluded, the total amount of food that the two humanitarian agencies had to import last year falls to 27,000 mt. In other words, **if UNRWA and WFP decided to abandon general food distribution (GFD) and adopt a CBT modality, Gazan importers would need to increase their business by 7 percent to meet the increase in local demand.** The Kerem Shalom crossing would probably not become a bottleneck as the overall number of trucks would remain about the same. This report suggests that

importers would be able to increase their turnover and **the Gazan retail sector would be able to absorb the extra demand.** Nevertheless, caution and a gradual increase should be adopted as retailers would need time to adapt to the new market conditions.

However, scaling up the CBT operation could require contracting over 2,000 new shops, which has administrative implications and carries the risk of market distortion. Furthermore, **political uncertainty and confrontations with Israel mean that caution would be needed in completely dismantling the in-kind pipeline.** Thus, considering that the market is certainly conducive for a large-scale CBT intervention and thinking of the positive secondary impacts of a voucher programme, the report suggests **a gradual and partial scale-up of the CBT intervention in the Gaza Strip.**

The report also encourages **carefully planned price monitoring activities** not only to measure the volatility that characterizes food prices in Gaza, but also because the eventual reduction in food aid and the money injected into the Gazan economy will likely push food prices up. Finally, the current practice of fixing a ceiling price in contracted shops and assigning beneficiaries to shops should be closely analysed and eventually reviewed. In fact, the risk of creating market distortion and the deflationary context would suggest relaxing these settings to boost competition across shops and likely offset the potential price increases mentioned above.

XI. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONVENES UN FORUM TO MARK FIFTY YEARS OF OCCUPATION

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation at the United Nations Headquarters on 29 and 30 June 2017 in New York. The following is the Chair's Summary:

The United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation was convened at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 29 and 30 June 2017, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). A day-long event entitled "Ending the Occupation: The Path to Independence, Justice, and Peace for Palestine" was held on 29 June, followed by a civil society forum entitled "Ending the Occupation: Creating the Space for Human Rights, Development, and a Just Peace" on 30 June.

The Forum brought together international experts, representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society, including Palestinians and Israelis, as well as academics and students of diverse backgrounds and views to discuss the ongoing occupation. A series of moderated interactive panels underscores the importance of ending the occupation as an antecedent step towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Forum provided experts and civil society organizations (CSOs) with a valuable advocacy platform to inform policy and diplomatic action on the question of Palestine at UN Headquarters.

At the inaugural session, the message of Secretary-General António Guterres, delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, noted that ending the occupation is the only way to lay the foundations for an enduring peace that meets both the Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and

sovereignty. Recalling that five decades of occupation have fuelled recurring cycles of violence and retribution, its ending would remove a driver of violent extremism and terrorism in the region. The Secretary-General called for a return to direct negotiations and reiterated his offer to work with all relevant stakeholders to support a genuine peace process. In her own opening remarks, Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed emphasized that the two-state solution is the only path to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis can realize their national and historic aspirations and live in peace, security, and dignity. All unilateral actions that undermine the two-state solution, particularly the continued expansion of Israeli settlements which constitute a violation of international law, should end. She highlighted the occupation's humanitarian costs noting that the most vulnerable are paying the highest price for political failure on the part of various stakeholders, including the international community. The Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Fodé Seck (Senegal), highlighted the responsibility of the international community to redouble its efforts to reach a viable two-state solution on the basis of international law and all relevant UN resolutions. He stressed that ending the occupation is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. On behalf of the State of Palestine, the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Saeb Erakat, described the ongoing occupation as an opportune environment for extremism in the Middle East. He called for accountability on the part of the Israeli

Government, including with respect to its 'apartheid' policies and discriminatory laws. He called for all of the international community to recognize the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and underscored that Gaza is an integral part of a Palestinian state and called on Hamas to end its 'coup d'état'. Finally, he expressed hope that the engagement of the US administration would lead to peace.

Following the Opening Session, Regional Organisations and Committee Members read out official statements. The statements of other States were published on the Committee website.

The first panel on "The Costs and Consequences of Fifty Years of Occupation", recalled that Israel had taken control of East Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Highs and the Sinai peninsula following the June 1967 war. While Sinai was eventually returned to Egypt, the other territories remained in a patchwork of different arrangements, including Israeli occupation. Other speakers described the ongoing Israeli occupation as an affront to the international legal order. An Israeli speaker argued that for his country, 1967 had brought military grandeur but moral collapse, pointing out that the rise of the Israeli right could not be separated from the 1967 war. He added that Israel has never had the kind of global outreach it enjoys today, and the "Boycott, Divestment Sanctions" (BDS) campaign has had only a marginal, if any, impact on conditions inside the country. While Israelis do not want a one-state solution, many question why the country should make any effort towards two states now, when its economy was booming, international relations had never been better, and there was a friendly US Administration in place. Another speaker noted the pervasive oppressive situation in the Gaza Strip particularly for young people, where

they represented more than 60 per cent of the population. Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, first and foremost want their human dignity preserved. Speakers recalled that the question of Palestine was the longest-running issue on the United Nations agenda and asserted that Israel was getting away with 'apartheid' without serious accountability. Israel had to transform from the occupier of the Palestinian people to their neighbour.

The second panel "Beyond Occupation: The Path Ahead to Palestinian Independence and a Just Peace", noted that while there was a possibility of renewed US-led peace talks, it would be overly optimistic to expect that these would yield a lasting peaceful solution. Speakers cautioned against regionalizing peace talks as this would risk reinforcing ongoing regional instability, and called for a bigger role for the European Union. Similarly, partial measures were viewed as perpetuating the occupation and support was expressed for the Arab Initiative that spelled the endgame. It was also pointed out that direct negotiations were unhelpful when the balance of power was so unequal. An Israeli scholar highlighted the PLO's 1988 decision to recognize Israel and the recent Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) designed to stop Israel's creeping annexation of Palestinian land. She stressed that civil society and opposition parties, with help of the international community, play an important role in advocating for change and the realization of two sovereign and independent states. Others reminded that the international community had a responsibility to guarantee that occupation was not profitable, but costly, for Israel. The efforts of anti-occupation civil society, particularly in the United States and among the Jewish community, were mentioned as being important.

In his welcome remarks on the second day, the Chair of the CEIRPP Working Group and Deputy Representative of Malta to the United Nations, David Mansfield, recalled GA resolution 71/20 which requested the Committee “to support the achievement without delay of an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967”. In the implementation of its mandate, the Committee considered cooperation with Palestinian, Israeli and other CSOs of paramount importance.

In her a keynote address “The role of civil society in achieving an end to the occupation, conflict transformation and a just peace” Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams recalled the Campaign to Ban Landmines as a model of civil society action that could be replicated in different contexts, stressing the importance of coordinated action and systematic documentation in efforts to bring about change. Governments change policy when civil society pushes them to move and power never concedes power without pressure, she stated.

The first panel “The Gaza Strip: An Integral Part of the State of Palestine” called for sustained international engagement on Gaza and a shift from a humanitarian to a human rights framework, which would take into account the legal obligations of the occupying power and other duty-bearers. Speakers emphasized the indispensability of the Gaza Strip to the broader question of Palestine; and how Gaza should be dealt with as a political issue rather than as a national security and military challenge. Also highlighted was the connection between the West Bank and Gaza, pointing out that Israel’s policy documents showed that many of the policies on Gaza were not in fact grounded in security concerns. Providing examples of living conditions in Gaza, speakers reported that continued electricity cuts were resulting in an

environmental disaster and emphasized the need to put accountability at the centre of the debate.

The second panel “Enforcement of International Law and Accountability: How to Make a Difference?” discussed how the travel ban imposed on Gaza was undermining efforts to document abuse as required to hold all parties accountable for violations of international law. Lack of accountability also affected Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, while labelling human rights organizations and the Human Rights Council as ‘anti-Semitic’ or ‘anti-Israeli’ in order to silence criticism risked undermining the international human rights system. Noting lack of progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), a speaker focused on the need to operationalize its call on all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. Stressing that civil society action had been more successful in changing corporate behaviour than government policy, another speaker highlighted the relevance of soft law, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and called on OHCHR to publish the database of businesses operating in settlements as mandated by the Human Rights Council.

The third panel “Beyond Occupation: In Search of a Just and Lasting Peace” emphasized the need to change the balance of power through popular Palestinian resistance; engaging in BDS, restoring internal unity, and reintegrating all Palestinian people in one common strategy. An Israeli speaker stressed the importance of acknowledging the Nakba, the right of return and gender perspectives, and encouraged the use of the language of apology as a crucial form of pre-transitional justice. Highlighting that a growing segment

of the Jewish community in the United States supports Palestinian rights, a panellist asserted that grassroots movements must step in when States are unwilling or unable to act, which can create conditions to realize an end to the occupation, the right of return and equal rights for Palestinians in Israel. One speaker noted how churches had shifted their focus to ‘what groups and individuals can do themselves’ to challenge the

occupation, such as purchasing Palestinian goods rather than just boycotting Israeli goods. BDS could be a form of non-violent resistance that in the past had proven effective. Diaspora representatives argued that they had a role in raising awareness on the question of Palestine as well as contributing to policy inside the Palestinian structures.

