



DIVISION FOR  
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 HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNED ABOUT HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GAZA**

*On 11 August 2017, the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ravina Shamdasani, issued the following [statement](#):*

We are deeply concerned about the steady deterioration in the humanitarian conditions and the protection of human rights in Gaza.

At the height of summer, with soaring temperatures, electricity provision has not risen above six hours per day since the beginning of the current crisis in April, and has often been under four hours. This has a grave impact on the provision of essential health, water and sanitation services. Power outages threaten the life and well-being of vulnerable groups, particularly those needing urgent medical care. We have observed an increasingly dire situation for the men, women and children of Gaza amid a deepening economic crisis, coupled with continuing restrictions on movement and freedom of expression. The desperate situation has also contributed to violent crime, domestic violence, including femicides, and attempted suicides, although exact data is hard to obtain.

Israel, the State of Palestine and the authorities in Gaza are not meeting their obligations to promote and protect the rights of the residents of Gaza. Israel, as the occupying power, has responsibility under

international humanitarian law to ensure the well-being of the population. Israel, the State of Palestine and the authorities in Gaza also have clear concurrent human rights obligations towards the Palestinians in Gaza. The Israeli blockade and closure continue to disproportionately affect the civilian population and must be lifted. The recent measures to decrease the provision of electricity, and to cut the salaries and order early retirement of civil servants in Gaza, are having a direct, negative impact on the social and economic rights of Gazans. The lack of transparency in the use of resources, and the continuing suppression of freedom of speech and assembly by the authorities raise further concerns for the protection of fundamental rights of the population in the Gaza Strip.

We urge Israel, the State of Palestine and the authorities in Gaza to uphold the human rights of the population in Gaza. We also call on the international community to respond to the UN's urgent appeal for humanitarian aid, to honour pledges made to support reconstruction and development of Gaza, and to work with the parties to bring a resolution to the current crisis.

## **II. UNRWA CONCERNED ABOUT HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF THE THREATENED EVICTION OF A REFUGEE FAMILY IN EAST JERUSALEM**

*The following [statement](#) was issued on 15 August 2017 by UNRWA Spokesperson Christopher Gunness:*

UNRWA is concerned about the humanitarian impact of the threatened eviction of the Shamasneh family from their home in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. We appeal to the Israeli authorities to reconsider their decision.

The members of the Shamasneh family are long-standing Palestine refugee residents

in East Jerusalem, which is occupied territory and affected by continued settlement expansion contrary to international law. It is a matter of deep concern that Palestine refugees who have already endured multiple displacements should be subject to the humiliation of the kind inflicted by forced evictions.

## **III. STATEMENT BY UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR PIPER ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY**

*On 18 August 2017, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#):*

Today marks World Humanitarian Day, an annual occasion dedicated by the United Nations General Assembly to raising public awareness of the millions of people who risk their lives in order to provide food, water and other assistance to people in desperate need in conflicts, in natural disasters and other emergencies. This year the UN and its partners come together on this day to reaffirm that civilians caught in conflict are #NotATarget and to demand global action to protect them.

In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), aid workers serving with 13 UN agencies, 80 members of the international NGO association AIDA, and many national organizations deliver critical assistance daily, sometimes at significant personal risk. In 2016, our teams provided food assistance

to 1.6 million Palestinians, shelter assistance to over 150,000 people, emergency water, sanitation and hygiene services to more than half a million people, and emergency health services to over 1.2 million. This year, we aim to assist 1.6 million Palestinians - many in need of protection from violations of international law, or in need of better access to basic services, or whose coping strategies have been depleted after so many years of uncertainty and insecurity.

This year, on World Humanitarian Day, we salute the tireless work of humanitarian aid workers in the oPt and beyond. We echo the UN Secretary-General's global call for enhanced respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, and for the protection of civilians.

#### **IV. UNRWA REGRETS ALLEGATIONS RELATED TO SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN MEDICAL SERVICES AT QALQILYA HOSPITAL**

*The following [statement](#) was issued on 21 August 2017 by UNRWA:*

UNRWA regrets the recourse by certain groups and institutions to personal attacks and unfounded allegations in expressing opposition to the Agency's decision to suspend certain medical services at Qalqilya Hospital until the Agency completes its investigation into the death of a patient and related appraisal of the hospital operations and performance.

The decision to halt the intake of new patients for certain treatments at Qalqilya hospital is an Agency decision and personal attacks against the Agency's West Bank Director of Operations and other staff are totally unacceptable. Uninterrupted access for Palestine refugees to UNRWA services,

the continuity of these services and the safety and security of UNRWA staff are paramount.

UNRWA views with deep concern the irresponsible reference to "genocide" in describing actions taken to improve and strengthen services to Palestine refugees.

The Agency remains committed to delivering health and other services to Palestine refugees, in accordance with its mandate. Despite very challenging financial conditions UNRWA continues rendering effective and essential services to millions of Palestine refugees, including those residing in Qalqilya.

#### **V. ASG FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 23 August 2017, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are excerpts from the briefing ([S/PV.8028](#)):*

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As detailed last month by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov (see [S/PV.8011](#)), the recent crisis in Jerusalem once again highlighted the unsustainable nature of the current situation and the need for a political horizon and a clear recommitment by the international community and both parties to ending the occupation and to realizing a two-State solution that meets the legitimate national aspirations and security needs of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Following the deadly 14 July attack in which two policemen were killed by three

assailants in the Old City, three Israelis were stabbed to death in a terror attack and six Palestinians were killed during primarily peaceful protests, as a result of live ammunition, which raises concerns about the use of force by Israeli security forces. I join the Secretary-General in commending the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in line with the latter's special and historic role, for bringing that crisis to a conclusion. I also note positively the calls for de-escalation by prominent religious leaders on both sides. We encourage continued discussion among all parties concerned to ensure the safety and security of all worshippers and visitors while upholding the historic status quo in the holy

sites. In that context, continued security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is paramount, and the official resumption of contact between the parties is vital.

In other incidents in recent weeks, two Palestinians were killed and more than 150 injured were by Israeli security forces. Four Israelis were injured by Palestinians, including one civilian. On 28 July, a Palestinian man was shot dead by Israeli security forces for reportedly attempting to stab a soldier at the Gush Etzion Junction of the West Bank. On 2 August, an Israeli civilian was seriously wounded during a stabbing attack by a Palestinian in the Israeli town of Yavneh. On 8 August, militants in Gaza fired a rocket that landed in an open area in southern Israel. The following day, the Israeli Air Force retaliated with missile fire at two Hamas installations in Gaza, injuring three people. On 17 August, an alleged suicide bombing killed one and injured five others in the southern Gaza strip.

Over the past month, developments occurred that further undermined trust between the parties. On 26 July, the Israeli Knesset approved the first reading of an amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel. If approved, that law would further cement Israeli control of occupied East Jerusalem and would limit the ability of both sides to reach a negotiated solution that is in line with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and prior agreements. Jerusalem is the final status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties. Any move that could have an impact on demographics in the city is extremely worrisome and could spark violence.

On 25 July, 15 Israeli settler families illegally occupied the so-called Machpela

House, in the divided city of Hebron, despite an ongoing Israeli legal process regarding ownership of the House. We urge Israeli authorities to resolve the situation quickly to avoid further tensions in that already highly charged town. Settlers reportedly also placed mobile homes near the settlement of Halamish in response to last month's deadly attack there, as well as within the Shvut Rachel neighbourhood of the Shilo settlement. On 3 August, the Israeli Prime Minister delivered an inaugural speech at the launch of the construction of 1,000 new housing units in the Beitar Ilit settlement. In the speech, he praised the achievement of his Government in promoting settlements. Such actions only fuel perceptions that those working to obstruct the two-State solution are gaining the upper hand. I must reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

In a few days' time, we will mark the third anniversary of the ceasefire that ended the most recent round of hostilities between Hamas and Israel in the Gaza Strip in 2014, in which close to 1,500 civilians were killed. Since then, the overall humanitarian conditions in Gaza have worsened. That was clearly documented in a recent United Nations country team report that looked at the state of Gaza's population since Hamas' takeover of the Strip in 2007, thereby increasing concerns that the Strip could become unlivable by 2020. The punishing measures taken against Gaza by the Palestinian Authority since April only add to the crippling humanitarian effect of Israel's closures on the population. Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should pay the price.

Despite reconstruction efforts over the past three years, approximately 29,000 people remain displaced, while living in temporary shelters and in poor conditions.

Completing our collective reconstruction effort in Gaza is within sight, but Member States need to fulfil their funding commitments. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, established by Israel and the Palestinian Authority with support from the United Nations in the aftermath of the conflict, has enabled much of the reconstruction. I encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to intensify their engagement towards improving the Mechanism to reach its full potential. It is also time for the parties to discuss the future of that provisional instrument with the goal of fully lifting all closures.

Despite the import of fuel from Egypt to run the Gaza power plant, most residents are experiencing the sweltering summer heat with only four to five hours of electricity per day. The impact of the ongoing energy crisis is far-reaching, while affecting the availability of clean water, health care and sanitation services. The United Nations continues to provide a lifeline through its provision of emergency fuel in support of a number of critical facilities. I call on Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the divisions. I encourage them to reach an agreement that would allow the legitimate Palestinian authorities to take up their responsibilities in Gaza, as a step towards the formation of a united and democratically elected Palestinian

Government based on the principles of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Hamas must also ensure that calm is maintained by stopping the militant buildup against Israel and by doing its utmost to sustain security at the border with Egypt. Israel should step-up measures to lift the closures and facilitate development in Gaza as overall calm persists in the Strip in line with resolution 1860 (2009). I also call on donors to respond urgently to the \$25 million humanitarian appeal made in July in the wake of the electricity crisis so as to fill the current 70 per cent funding gap.

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With regard once again to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, last month's crisis in the Old City of Jerusalem, which is home to sites holy to all three monotheistic religions, demonstrated that tensions can ignite, thereby threatening to transform the nature of the conflict and spread across borders. It is therefore essential that international and regional partners remain engaged in ending the occupation and resolving all final-status issues, in upholding and implementing the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace and security based of all the relevant United Nations resolutions and in supporting both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to take the necessary steps towards ensuring an enduring peace.

## **VI. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REMARKS AT UNRWA SCHOOL IN GAZA**

*Following are the [remarks](#) UN Secretary-General António Guterres made to the press when he visited an UNRWA school in Gaza on 30 August, 2017:*

I am deeply moved to be in Gaza today, unfortunately, to witness one of the most dramatic humanitarian crises that I have seen in many years working as a humanitarian in the United Nations.

And deeply impressed by the suffering of the Gaza people in these tragic circumstances. Gaza needs a solution for its problems but, in between, I appeal to the international community to strongly support humanitarian aid in Gaza and, from the limited resources of our Central Emergency

Relief Fund, I have ordered the immediate release of \$4 million to support the activities of the United Nations staff that is working for the benefit of the Gaza people in these tragic circumstances.

I have to say that I am very proud of the work that the UN staff, the majority of them from Gaza, is doing here in support of the people of Gaza in these very difficult moments.

The solution for the problems of the people of Gaza is not humanitarian.

I would like to leave here with two strong appeals.

The first, an appeal for unity. Yesterday, I was in Ramallah. Today, I am in Gaza. They are both parts of the same Palestine. So, I appeal for the unity, in line with the principles of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The division only undermines the cause of the Palestinian people.

The second appeal, allow me to repeat what I said yesterday in Ramallah, with

many years of contact with this conflict, I have a dream. A dream to one day see the Holy Land with two States – Israel and Palestine – living in peace and security together. Because of that, I have appealed for a credible political process in order to address the problems that exist and to allow for the two-state solution to be implemented, removing the obstacles on the ground. But, at the same time, together with that political process, a program of action to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. It is important to open the closures, in line with resolution 1860 of the Security Council. It is important to avoid the buildup of the militantism that can undermine the confidence between the two people.

And being in Gaza, allow me to express my dream in a different way: the dream to be able to come back to Gaza one day and to see Gaza as part of a Palestinian state in peace, with prosperity and welfare for the people of this wonderful place.

Shoukran.