



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

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

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
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I. ACTING HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES' DESTRUCTION OF DONOR-FUNDED CLASSROOMS

The following [statement](#) was released on 4 February 2018 by the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Roberto Valent:

I am deeply concerned by the Israeli authorities' demolition this morning of two donor-funded classrooms (3rd and 4th grade), serving 26 Palestinian school children in the Bedouin and refugee community of Abu Nuwar, located in Area C on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The demolition was carried out on grounds of lack of Israeli-issued permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain.

Abu Nuwar is one of the most vulnerable communities in need of humanitarian assistance in the occupied West Bank. The conditions it faces also represent those of many Palestinian communities, where a combination of Israeli policies and practices – including demolitions and restricted access to basic services, such as education – have created a coercive environment that violates the human rights of residents and generates a risk of forcible transfer. This is the sixth demolition or confiscation incident in an Abu Nuwar school by the Israeli authorities since February 2016.

As in Abu Nuwar, hundreds of children attending one of at least 45 schools in the West Bank (37 in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem) with pending demolition orders, are living in instability, with the specter of school demolition ever-present, threatening their access to education. Other children in Area C communities lacking a primary school often must walk or travel long distances to reach their schools and are exposed to settler harassment or searches at checkpoints. These constraints undermine the quality of education and increase the chances of early dropout.

I call on the Israeli authorities to fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and immediately cease all practices that are directly or indirectly generating a risk of forcible transfer for Palestinians in various parts of the West Bank, including the destruction of schools and related property.

II. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES THE FIRST MEETING OF THE 2018 SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 5 February 2018, the Committee of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People met in New York and elected its Officers and adopted its programme of work ([A/AC.183/2018/L.3](#)). Secretary-General António Guterres made the following statement ([SG/SM/18882-GA/PAL/1403](#)):

I am honoured to take part in this meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I congratulate Chair Ambassador Fodé Seck and the Bureau of the Committee on your election. And I commend all of you for your commitment.

The Committee has worked tirelessly to help realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — including their right to self-determination. You have been a leading voice in supporting

the achievement of a two-State solution able to end the Israeli occupation. You have also mobilized international support and assistance to the Palestinian people, and I thank you for all these efforts.

As we all know, the question of Palestine is inextricably linked with the history of the United Nations and is one of the longest unresolved issues on our agenda.

Over many decades, the international community has encouraged a negotiated process leading to a two-State solution, addressing all final status issues on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and mutual agreements as the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace.

The Security Council has consistently reiterated its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

The General Assembly has reaffirmed the two-State solution through the establishment of a Palestinian State as the only way to achieve stability, peace, prosperity and development in the region.

And I have always said that I would like to see a Palestinian State and an Israeli State, both with capital in Jerusalem.

However, we must face today's difficult reality. After decades of convergence, global consensus could be eroding, making effective concerted action more difficult to achieve, at a time when it is more important than ever.

Negative trends on the ground have the potential to create an irreversible one-State reality that is incompatible with realizing the legitimate national, historic and democratic aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Ongoing settlement construction and expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under United Nations resolutions and international law. It is a major obstacle to peace and it must be halted and reversed. Violence and incitement continue to fuel a climate of fear and mistrust.

The humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza remains dire. The United Nations country team in Palestine has predicted that Gaza will become unliveable by 2020 unless concrete action is taken to improve basic services and infrastructure. Yet Gaza remains squeezed by crippling closures and a state of constant humanitarian emergency. Two million Palestinians are struggling everyday with crumbling infrastructure, an electricity crisis, a lack of basic services, chronic unemployment and a paralyzed economy. All of this is taking place amid an unfolding environmental disaster.

I am extremely concerned that the latest shortfall in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) funding will gravely impair the agency's ability to deliver on its mandate and preserve critical services such as education and health care for Palestine refugees.

At stake is the human security, rights and dignity of the 5 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East. But also at stake is the stability of the entire region which may be affected if UNRWA

is unable to continue to provide vital services to the Palestine refugee population, both across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

I appeal to the generosity of the international community not to let that happen. I would also reiterate the importance of advancing Palestinian unity. Reconciliation is a key step in reaching the larger objective of a Palestinian State and lasting peace.

I remain steadfast in the United Nations and my commitment to supporting the parties in their efforts to make the two-State solution a reality. There is no Plan B. A two-State solution is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and secure a sustainable solution to the conflict.

III. OCHA WARNS THAT AN ELECTRICITY CRISIS BRINGS GAZA TO VERGE OF DISASTER

On 6 February 2018, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory issued the following [press release](#):

Emergency fuel for critical facilities in Gaza will become exhausted within the next ten days, the United Nations warned today, noting an urgent need for donor support to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe driven by the energy crisis.

Supported by donors, the UN coordinates the delivery of emergency fuel to run back-up generators and vehicles in order to ensure that a minimum level of life-saving health, water and sanitation services are maintained in the midst of the dire electricity shortage facing the blockaded Strip. At present, the nearly two million Palestinian residents of Gaza, over half of whom are children, receive electricity for no more than eight hours each day.

In 2018, US\$6.5 million is required to provide 7.7 million litres of emergency fuel. This is the bare minimum needed to stave off a collapse of services; for the full functioning of critical facilities, the need is 1.4 million litres per month, or about \$10 million per year. Currently at risk are emergency and diagnostic services, like MRIs, CT and x-rays, intensive care units and operating theatres in 13 public hospitals; some 55 sewage pools; 48 desalination plants; and solid waste collection capacity.

“Immediate donor support is urgent to ensure that vulnerable Palestinians in Gaza can access life-saving health, water and sanitation services,” said the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Roberto Valent. “Hospitals have already begun to close. Without funding, more service providers will be forced to suspend operations over the coming weeks, and the situation will deteriorate dramatically, with potential impacts on the entire population. We cannot allow this to happen.”

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS JAMIE MCGOLDRICK OF IRELAND DEPUTY SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

On 6 February 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Jamie McGoldrick as the new United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The following is the related press release ([SG/A/1786-BIO/5059](#)):

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of Jamie McGoldrick of Ireland as Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He succeeds Robert Piper of Australia, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his commitment and dedicated service.

Mr. McGoldrick brings extensive experience in humanitarian affairs, international cooperation, economic development and political affairs. Since 2015 he served as United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Yemen. He assumed that position after serving as the Resident Coordinator and the UNDP Resident Representative in Nepal since 2013 and Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of UNDP in Georgia from 2009 to 2013.

He was previously a senior manager with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, notably as the Chief of the Humanitarian Reform Support Unit (2006-2009), and Section Chief of the Middle East, North Africa and Great Lakes Unit (2005-2006). He worked with the International Red Cross movement and non-governmental organizations in a number of countries in Africa and as news producer and researcher with several television production companies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McGoldrick holds a master's degree in political science and a bachelor's degree in social sciences, and he has additional qualifications in disaster management, preventive diplomacy and mediation.

Born in Ireland in 1955, he is married and has two children.

V. WHO OFFICE FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA CALLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO HEALTH SECTOR POWER SHORTAGES IN GAZA

On 8 February 2018, the World Health Organization Office for West Bank and Gaza issued the following [press release](#):

Gaza's health sector was on the verge of collapse due to dwindling fuel supplies until the United Arab Emirates stepped in this week with a US\$2 million grant to sustain hospital backup generators for critical health services. The donation will provide enough fuel to keep facilities running for several months.

“The UAE’s timely support will save lives, but a more sustainable solution is required to address the chronic fuel and power shortages in Gaza that leave health facilities consistently on the verge of closure,” says Dr. Gerald Rockenschaub, Head of WHO’s Office for West Bank and Gaza.

Daily power cuts of 12-16 hours currently affect 28 hospitals and 153 primary care facilities in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Health has been rationing fuel supplies since January, when UN supplies for backup generators in 14 public hospitals drastically declined.

Between late January and early February 2018, two hospitals were forced to shut down: Durrah Hospital serving a catchment area of 250 000 people, and Gaza Psychiatric Hospital, the only mental health hospital in Gaza. Beit Hanoun Hospital, a 63-bed hospital located in the northern Gaza, was also partially closed, with the Emergency Department functioning at minimal capacity.

Public hospitals in the Gaza Strip provide life-saving healthcare for 1715 patients every day — including 113 newborns, 100 patients in intensive care units, 702 patients requiring hemodialysis, 200 patients in need of surgery, 100 women in need of obstetric surgeries, and 500 patients in need of emergency care.

Hospitals in Gaza are already over-stretched, with a bed occupancy rate of over 90%. With the closure of some hospitals, the extra burden placed on the remaining hospitals in operation will further strain the delivery of services, including surgery, emergency departments, intensive care units and maternity services.

“WHO is working with the Ministry of Health to establish longer-term strategic solutions to Gaza’s fuel crisis through the use of solar power, and establishing a dedicated and sustainable grid supply to support Gaza’s essential hospitals,” says Dr Mahmoud Daher, Head of WHO’s sub-office in Gaza.

Under-resourced public hospitals also face severe shortages in medicines and medical supplies. In January 2018, 40% of the essential drugs were completely depleted. This includes drugs used in emergency departments and other critical units. WHO is distributing over US\$1 million worth of medical equipment and procuring over US\$ 1.2 million worth of medicines and disposables, but these will only be sufficient to meet the critical patient needs in Gaza for less than 3 weeks.

More than 1.27 million people in the Gaza Strip are in need of critical lifesaving health services in 2018. As part of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Gaza, US\$3.12 million is required by WHO and health partners to ensure the continuity of life-saving health services this year.

VI. UN RIGHTS EXPERTS ALARMED BY DETENTION OF PALESTINIAN GIRL FOR SLAPPING AN ISRAELI SOLDIER

On 13 February 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, and José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, expressed alarm over the case of a Palestinian teenager, Ahed Tamini, who appeared before an Israeli military court after an incident in which she slapped an Israeli soldier. The following is a [press release](#) issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

UN human rights experts* have expressed alarm over the case of Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi who, after an incident in which she slapped an Israeli soldier, appeared before an Israeli military court today. The experts called for her release during the proceedings and that future hearings be held in strict accordance with international legal standards.

Tamimi, who is now 17 years old, has been held in detention since she was arrested at her home by Israeli soldiers on 19 December 2017. At the time, she was 16. Four days earlier, she was filmed physically confronting Israeli soldiers on her family's property in Nabi Salah, in the occupied West Bank.

On 1 January 2018, Tamimi was charged with a number of offences under Israeli military law, some stemming from the 15 December incident, and others dating back to April 2016. The court has ruled that she should remain in detention until the end of her trial. Tuesday's hearing was adjourned until early March.

“The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Israel has ratified, clearly states that children are to be deprived of their liberty only as a last resort, and only for the shortest appropriate period of time,” said Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

“None of the facts of this case would appear to justify her ongoing detention prior to her trial, particularly given the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child about the use of pre-trial detention and detention on remand.”

The experts said states were obliged to explore as far as possible alternatives to detention, and to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being.

They noted that Tamimi was arrested in the middle of the night by well-armed soldiers, and then questioned by Israeli security officials without a lawyer or family members present. “This violates the fundamental legal guarantee to have access to counsel during interrogation,” said José Guevara, Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

The experts also expressed concern about her place of detention – Hasharon prison in Israel – in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention which states that the deportation of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power, or to that of any other country, is prohibited, regardless of the motive.

“Sadly, this is not an isolated case,” said Lynk. “Figures from Palestine show that Israel detains and prosecutes between 500 to 700 Palestinian children in military courts annually.

“We have received reports that these children are commonly mistreated while in detention, subjected to both physical and psychological abuse, deprived of access to lawyers or family members during interrogation, and tried under a military court system in which there are significant concerns regarding independence and impartiality, and which has a worryingly high conviction rate.” In this respect, the experts referred to various opinions on Israel adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention which have emphasized the right of children to be tried by a juvenile justice system rather than before military tribunals, in accordance with relevant international human rights law.

The experts called on the Israeli authorities to respect and ensure basic due process rights, with particular attention to the rights and protections afforded to children and re-emphasized their call for Tamimi to be released in accordance with these protections.

* The UN experts: *Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.*

VII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ENCOURAGED BY TRILATERAL MEETING WITH PALESTINIAN, ISRAELI OFFICIALS

The following [statement](#) was issued on 15 February 2018 by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov:

Following his joint meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Major General Yoav (Poli) Mordechai on 14 February, UN Special Coordinator Mladenov stated:

“I am encouraged by the trilateral meeting yesterday, in which all sides focused on the urgent need to finalize the reconstruction of physical damages from the 2014 Gaza conflict and on facilitating critical humanitarian solutions related to the electricity, water and health sectors.

All sides agreed on the need for a joint review of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) to improve its functionality, transparency and predictability.

Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah addressed the urgent need to lift all Israeli closures and restrictions and improve movement of people between Gaza and the West Bank. He presented ideas for a number of immediate steps to address the situation on the ground and support efforts to return the Strip under the control of the legitimate Palestinian Authority.

Among other topics, Major General Mordechai underscored the need to resolve the matter of the missing Israeli soldiers and civilians that are being held in Gaza.

The UN also presented proposals to revitalize Gaza’s economy and discussed the conditions required to ease movement and access and support Palestinian development.”

VIII. PRESIDENT ABBAS, UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ADDRESS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 20 February 2018, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, addressed the Security Council while Secretary-General António Guterres and 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.” In addition, the Secretary-General chaired the meeting. The following are excerpts from the Verbatim Record (S/PV.8183):

The Secretary-General: I have just returned from a visit to Kuwait, which generously hosted a conference on the reconstruction of Iraq and helped mobilize critical resources. The international community showed its gratitude to the Iraqi people for their courageous victory over Da'esh. The support is a vote of confidence in the Government and the people of Iraq. Kuwait, Mr. President, played a very important leadership role in that very successful meeting.

Unfortunately, positive developments in Iraq are an exception in the region. That context underscores the need for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for far too long. I am here to reiterate my full personal commitment, and the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a two-State solution — a solution of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders; and a solution that addresses all final-status issues on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and mutual agreements. There is no plan B.

Yet we must face today's sad reality. After decades of support, the global consensus for a two-State solution could be eroding. Obstacles on the ground have the potential to create an irreversible one-State reality. It is simply impossible to square the circle of a one-State reality with the legitimate national, historic and democratic aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

At the same time, conditions for Palestinians in Gaza, which has been under the control of Hamas for a decade, are dire. Shortfalls in the funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are a matter of international concern. The human security, rights and dignity of 5 million Palestine refugees are at stake. So, too, is the stability of the region. I appeal to the international community to step up its generous support.

This is a time for dialogue, for reconciliation, for reason. At this moment of grave consequence, I appeal for effective concerted action by all parties. It is more important than ever.

Allow me now, Mr. President, to ask you to give the floor to the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, to deliver his monthly briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. Mladenov: We meet this month as regional tensions are taking an increasingly perilous turn. Fighting in Syria is increasing, endangering de-escalation arrangements and regional stability, as well as undermining efforts for a political solution. Despite the positive news from

Iraq and the defeat of Da'esh, much of the Middle East continues to be in the grips of an ongoing human tragedy of immense proportions.

Against that backdrop, and after over a century of hostilities, including 50 years of continued military occupation, Israelis and Palestinians are still no closer to peace. Many have lost hope that they will see it in their lifetimes. The enemies of peace are growing more confident by the day. They see every failure of the forces of moderation as a win for the forces of radicalization. They believe the political odds are turning in their favour. Day after day they are emboldened. Hindering peace are also those who push facts on the ground and who promote unilateral moves blocking the pathway back to the negotiating table.

None of that will bring us closer to resolving the conflict. None of it will respond to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to statehood or the Israeli longing for security. It will only drive us farther down the road of confrontation, suffering and a one-State reality of perpetual occupation.

Last month the international community discussed key priorities to advance the goal of peace at the extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians. At that meeting, I was encouraged by widespread, unequivocal messages reaffirming support for the two-State solution, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and the need to resume meaningful negotiations over all final-status issues, including the status of Jerusalem. Participants also made a critical commitment to undertaking efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, including support for projects focused on water, electricity and economic recovery.

My message to all was clear. First, we must clearly reaffirm that sustainable peace requires a two-State solution, which can be achieved only through a negotiated process. Israelis and Palestinians have defined the final-status issues and only they, together, can determine their resolution. Secondly, efforts must continue to seek implementation of concrete and transformative steps on the ground — including ending Israeli settlement expansion and advancing policy shifts, particularly in Area C — consistent with a transition to greater Palestinian civil authority, as called for in the 2016 report of the Middle East Quartet. Thirdly, the Palestinian Authority must continue to advance institution-building and service delivery to the Palestinian people and work towards bringing Gaza back under its control. Lastly, it is critical that any future peace proposal focus on the two-State solution and all final-status issues, as per prior agreements and relevant United Nations resolutions. Failure to do so could have dangerous repercussions.

Maintaining support for Palestine refugees is fundamental to the pursuit of peace and stability in the region. I reiterate my ongoing concern over the sizeable funding shortfall of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), despite the welcome flexibility of some Member States in accelerating the disbursement of their funding commitments. In addition, the emergency appeals launched on 30 January seek to raise \$800 million for the West Bank and Gaza, as well as for the Syria regional crisis, to meet the essential needs of some 1.5 million highly vulnerable people. I encourage Member States to consider urgently providing new funding for UNRWA's critical requirements.

As the peace process falters and the gulf between the two sides widens, Palestinians and Israelis continue to suffer the violent consequences on the ground. Seven Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in various incidents across the occupied Palestinian territory, and one Israeli civilian was stabbed and killed by a Palestinian in the West Bank. Three of the Palestinians killed died during violent clashes with Israeli security forces; one of them was a 16-year-old, shot near Ramallah. He was the fourth child killed in such circumstances since the beginning of the year.

I once again emphasize that the use of force must be calibrated and that lethal force should be used only as a last resort, with any resulting fatalities properly investigated by the authorities. I urge Israeli security forces to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid casualties in such circumstances. I call upon all sides to reject violence, condemn terror, ensure accountability and work to reduce tensions.

In recent days we have also witnessed dangerous security incidents in and around Gaza. On 17 February, four Israeli soldiers were wounded by an improvised explosive device placed at the Gaza fence. This was followed by Israeli airstrikes on some 18 Hamas targets, while Palestinian militants fired two rockets into Israel — one causing damage to a house in the Sha’ar HaNegev Regional Council. Two Palestinian teens were killed by Israeli security forces while reportedly attempting to approach the fence. Prior to this latest flare-up, during the course of the past month three more rockets were fired towards Israel, with two Israeli retaliatory airstrikes, all without injuries.

I encourage the international community to join the United Nations in calling on militants in Gaza to refrain from such provocations and end the building of tunnels and the firing of rockets towards Israel. Such actions and the response they elicit only risk the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, undermine peace efforts and increase the likelihood of another devastating conflict. I also take this opportunity to note the need to resolve the matter of the missing Israeli soldiers and civilians who are being held in Gaza.

Two additional incidents highlight the risk of escalation and the need for continued Israeli-Palestinian security coordination. These were the discovery of 12 roadside bombs in the West Bank on 26 January and the foiled attempt on 4 February to smuggle, within a shipment of medical equipment, a dual-use component used to make explosives into Gaza. I also note that the trial of 17-year-old Palestinian girl Ahed Tamimi started on 13 February behind closed doors. She has been detained on remand for two months to date. As stated in my last briefing (see [S/PV.8167](#)), the detention of a child must be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time.

Throughout the reporting period, Israel’s illegal settlement-related activities continued unabated. In response to last month’s killing of a resident of the illegal Havat Gilad outpost, on 4 February, Israel approved the establishment of a new settlement to absorb its residents. I strongly denounce the expansion of the settlement enterprise as compensation for Israeli deaths. Settlement construction is not a morally appropriate way to respond to murder. On 12 February, Israel also advanced two settlement plans for some 85 housing units near Bethlehem. I reiterate the long-standing United Nations position that all settlement-related

activities are illegal under international law and a substantial obstacle to peace, and I call on Israel to seize and reverse such policies.

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures also continued, with 31 structures affected, resulting in 33 Palestinians being displaced. Particularly concerning was the demolition of two donor-funded classrooms serving Palestinian children in the Bedouin community of Abu Nuwar. This is the sixth demolition or confiscation in the school since February 2016. Overall, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 44 schools in the occupied West Bank are currently at risk of demolition. I urge Israel to cease this practice.

I briefed the Council last week on the situation in Gaza. Month after month, we have raised the alarm about the humanitarian, economic and ecological calamity underway. It bears repeating that the situation is unsustainable. Continuing power cuts of up to 20 hours per day severely undermine the provision of basic services. Without additional immediate fuel deliveries, the situation could deteriorate, with dramatic consequences. I reiterate the Secretary-General's appreciation to the United Arab Emirates and the State of Qatar for their support in dealing with the emergency. Their immediate response to our appeal has helped stave off a further deterioration.

I am encouraged by the trilateral meeting I had last week with Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah and Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Major General Mordechai, in which we focused on the humanitarian problems in Gaza. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism and agreed that there is a need for a joint review to improve its functionality, transparency and predictability.

As the humanitarian crisis in Gaza escalates, the implementation of the Egyptian-brokered intra-Palestinian agreement has stalled. Absent immediate steps to address the humanitarian crisis and to revive the economy, we will face a total institutional and economic collapse in Gaza. This is not an alarmist prediction; it is a fact. I welcome the proposal of the Palestinian Government to incorporate into its 2018 budget some 20,000 civil service employees in Gaza. A positive outcome, however, is contingent, inter alia, upon the collection of taxes, the payment of salaries, the return of Government administration and, ultimately, security control of Gaza. I urge all sides to intensify their engagement and to move forward in this process.

For a decade, 2 million people have lived under the full control of Hamas, with crippling Israeli closures and movement and access restrictions. Throughout this period, the international community has provided aid and humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering and to rebuild what was destroyed in three devastating conflicts. It is time to break this cycle. It is time to return Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian Authority, for there can be no Palestinian State without Palestinian unity. Those who stand in the way of reconciliation hurt the Palestinian national cause, and the price will be paid by generations of ordinary people.

...

In conclusion, and to return to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I would like to reiterate that we in the international community must continue advocating for substantial changes to Israeli policy on the situation in the West Bank, including a halt to settlement construction, the demolition of structures and the prevention of Palestinian development in Area C. On Gaza, we must work collectively to alleviate the humanitarian disaster and provide full support to Egypt's reconciliation efforts. Our support to UNRWA also remains vital. I also hope that we will be able to look beyond the closed, dark negotiation rooms, currently empty of diplomats and politicians, to see that there are Israeli and Palestinian advocates for peace working tirelessly to promote change — civil-society organizations, youth and women's groups and religious and community leaders, which all have a critical role to play and must be supported and allowed to express their views freely. We rarely discuss their role and we do not speak often enough of the challenges they face, but their efforts must be recognized and supported.

In this Chamber we have often spoken of the need for leadership on both sides if we are to reach a deal — a compromise, through negotiations — that will enable the Israelis and Palestinians to separate and be masters of their own fates. But they would not be negotiations between equals, for one side is under military occupation. Its leadership has committed to working for a peaceful solution to the conflict through negotiations. I urge the international community not to give up on support for the moderate Palestinian leadership or for building up the institutions that will increase the chances of success. Our window of opportunity is closing, and if we do not seize it quickly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be engulfed in the whirlwind of religious radicalization that continues to roil the region.

IX. IMF TEAM ASSESSES ECONOMIC TRENDS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

A team from the International Monetary Fund visited East Jerusalem and Ramallah from 4 to 14 February 2018 to assess recent economic developments in the West Bank and Gaza. The following [statement](#) was issued at the conclusion of the mission:

·With growth slowing and scarce economic and financial buffers, the strained geopolitical situation is testing the resilience of the Palestinian economy.

·Reunifying the West Bank and Gaza under a single administration could provide a modest boost to growth, but managing the budgetary costs will not be easy.

This will require a fundamental shift by all parties—deeper reforms by the Palestinian Authority, stronger Israeli cooperation on fiscal leakages, and revived donor engagement.

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff team led by Karen Ongley visited East Jerusalem and Ramallah during February 4–14, 2018, to assess recent economic developments in the West Bank and Gaza. The IMF team met with Finance Minister Shukry Bishara, Governor Azzam Shawwa, and other Palestinian officials. At the end of the visit, Ms. Ongley issued the following statement:

“Strains on the Palestinian economy became more evident during 2017. While the authorities see somewhat higher growth, staff estimates that growth slowed to close to 3 percent. Liquidity constraints and fewer economic buffers held back consumption and

investment, most acutely in Gaza. At this rate, growth will not generate enough jobs or meaningfully improve living standards for the Palestinian people. The continued deterioration of the socio-economic environment is a major concern, and there is a growing risk that humanitarian conditions may be nearing a breaking point.

“One bright spot, however, was that fiscal performance in 2017 was better than expected. In the face of difficult circumstances, the authorities contained the overall deficit to an estimated 7.8 percent of GDP and the recurrent deficit to around 5½ percent of GDP. Strong performance on domestic customs and income tax helped to ameliorate the absence of the large one-off receipts (telecommunication license fees and backpay of clearance revenues) from 2016. The PA also kept overall spending in check. The authorities continued efforts to pay down the stock of arrears, but low external budget support and the PA refraining from net new bank financing, saw the recurrence of arrears.

“The resilience of the Palestinian economy in the face of long-standing political and security constraints is now being tested. It is laboring under the weight of geographic fragmentation, a difficult business environment, the steady erosion of productive capital, and restrictions on movement and access. In these circumstances, we are likely to see growth continue to stagnate at around 2⅓ percent of GDP in the years ahead.

“Even so, the outlook has become even more vulnerable to geopolitical uncertainties, the risk of further declines in donor support (for the PA or relief agencies), and unrest triggered by the dearth of economic opportunity or unfulfilled expectations of reunification.

“While a breakthrough in the peace process would be the real economic game-changer, the prospect of reunification could provide a modest boost to growth over the medium term. However, managing the fiscal impact of the PA resuming control of government operations in Gaza will not be easy, as the costs will outweigh the near-term revenue gains. This will require comprehensive reforms by the PA, alongside a rebound in donor support and tangible progress toward reducing fiscal leakages based on fair and transparent discussions.

“We welcome the authorities actively considering reform options to help manage the costs of reunification as they prepare the 2018 budget. It will be important to undertake measures that optimize the revenue intake. However, the magnitude of the challenge also need medium-term actions to gradually reduce the overall spending and shift from an oversized wage bill to much needed investment.

“Maintaining a healthy financial sector will be instrumental role in supporting growth in Gaza once reunification processes take hold. This calls for active oversight of the banking sector, with close scrutiny of capital buffers, loan provisioning, delinquent loans, and credit exposures. Continued cooperation between the Palestinian Monetary Authority and Bank of Israel will be pivotal in maintaining smooth functioning Israeli-Palestinian bank relations.”