



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. OHCHR, UNICEF EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN GAZA

The following joint press [statement](#) was issued on 1 August 2018 by Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, James Heenan, Head of OHCHR in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and Genevieve Boutin, UNICEF Special Representative in State of Palestine:

We are deeply concerned that children's rights continue to be violated, and demand that concrete, immediate steps be taken to allow children to live free of fear and to realize all their rights.

Despite continuous warnings and appeals by the United Nations and others to put the protection of children first, week after week, reports emerge from the Gaza Strip and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory of children killed or seriously injured, some as young as 11. Meanwhile, children in Israel are exposed to fear, trauma, and grave injuries. This month alone, seven Palestinian children were killed by live ammunition and shelling from Israel. Two Israeli girls aged 14 and 15 also reportedly sustained injuries from rockets and mortar shells indiscriminately launched by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel.

Since the start of the demonstrations against deteriorating living conditions in Gaza on 30 March 2018 at the Israel – Gaza fence, 26 Palestinian children have been killed, 21 during the demonstrations, and five others were killed by Israeli shelling or outside the context of demonstrations. In the same period, hundreds more children have been injured by live ammunition. A number of these children will suffer lifelong disabilities, including as a result of the amputation of limbs. Thousands are in need of urgent psychosocial assistance, specialised medical care, and support for their rehabilitation.

All over the occupied Palestinian territory, but particularly in the Gaza Strip, we see children robbed of every right. Families cope with four hours of electricity per day in the sweltering heat. Clean drinking water is expensive and hard to find. The start of the school year in one month will be very difficult for tens of thousands of families who cannot afford basic school supplies.

We deplore the too often cynical use of children in political rhetoric and propaganda on all sides. Of particular concern was last week's call by the organizing committee for "The Great March of Return" for Palestinians to demonstrate under the banner of "the Friday of our Child Martyrs" and the reported exposure of children to violence. Children should never be the target of violence and must not be put at risk of violence nor encouraged to participate in violence.

We call on Israel, as well as the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas authorities in Gaza to put children's rights ahead of any other considerations and to take immediate steps to alleviate their suffering. Respecting the rights of children and refraining from instrumentalizing their plight should be a priority for all. This context is not an exception.

II. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS EXPRESSES ALARM AT ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN GAZA

On 9 August, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#) on the situation in Gaza:

I am deeply alarmed by the recent escalation of violence between Gaza and Israel, and particularly by today's multiple rockets fired towards communities in southern Israel.

For months I have been warning that the humanitarian, security and political crisis in Gaza risks a devastating conflict that nobody wants. The UN has engaged with Egypt and all concerned parties in an unprecedented effort to avoid such a development.

Our collective efforts have prevented the situation from exploding until now. If the current escalation however is not contained immediately, the situation can rapidly deteriorate with devastating consequences for all people.

We will continue working hard to ensure that Gaza steps back from the brink, that all humanitarian issues are addressed and that Egyptian-led efforts to achieve intra-Palestinian reconciliation succeed.

III. ESCWA REITERATES ITS SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, CALLS TO PUT AN END TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION

On 13 August, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) issued the following [press release](#):

The Gaza Strip will be unlivable by 2020. That is what the [United Nations](#) has continued to warn as the world mobilizes efforts to achieve the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) by the universally agreed deadline.

Palestine is struggling to survive, attempting the path to development despite dire conditions imposed by Israel that have led to severe water shortages and food insecurity, limited employment opportunities, loss of property and resources, and many more devastating effects—some unfathomable such as daily threats on Palestinian lives.

In a [report](#) submitted at the [30th Ministerial Session](#) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ([ESCWA](#)) held in Beirut from 25 to 28 June, ESCWA describes these Israeli practices and policies in detail, underlining the economic and social effects of an 11-year blockade on the Palestinian people.

The Session, which this year focused on "technology for sustainable development in the Arab region", dedicated a segment to the situation of Palestine and adopted a [resolution](#) in which Arab States reiterated their support to Palestine, condemned Israeli practices, and affirmed Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital.

Recommendations to support the Palestinian people

In the resolution, member States recommended that the ESCWA Secretariat continue to monitor and analyse social and economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), the impact of the Israeli practices and policies, and the violations of international law perpetrated in the context of the occupation.

The document states that real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the oPt dropped significantly as unemployment rates among women and men increased due to Israeli policies and practices negatively impacting sectors that generate income and create jobs. In 2017, more than one fifth of Palestinian households were found to be food insecure, while in Gaza the numbers had fallen to the lowest levels due to limited access to agricultural lands, low supply and quality of water, intermittent energy supply and poor diets. About 2.5 million Palestinians are reportedly in need of humanitarian assistance.

Meanwhile, medical facilities across the oPt face supply shortages with an estimated 490,145 children facing challenges to access quality education in a safe, child-friendly environment.

ESCWA stressed that interventions are needed to spur industrial success to overcome the extraordinary constraints imposed by the occupation and to unleash the potential for resource-based manufacturing in the oPt. Further studies are expected to be carried out on selected sectors namely the mineral-based industry, agriculture and tourism, to evaluate the potential they hold and hindrances that constrain them.

Member States requested that the ESCWA Secretariat continue its work by providing research, studies and technical support to Palestinian institutions in accordance with their needs, in addition to supporting data collection and analysis to develop policies and programs that contribute to reducing the impact of the Israeli occupation.

A [report](#) presented by ESCWA to the Ministerial Session categorized the Israeli practices and policies as follows: land grab, land confiscation and seizure, displacement, revocation of residency permits, deportations, home demolitions, evictions and forced relocations, oppression, excessive use of force with impunity, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment, and collective punishment.

The ESCWA Secretariat invited member States to intensify communication with its own body as well as with the League of Arab States ([LAS](#)) and other concerned United Nations agencies that support the Palestinian people in their quest for the full attainment of their rights. It also called on Arab States to increase their support to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine ([UNRWA](#)) so it can continue to deliver assistance and basic services to refugees until their right to return is realized.

International support within the Economic and Social Council

One month later, the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), the UN organ to which ESCWA reports, adopted a resolution on 24 July regarding Palestine following a presentation delivered by Tarik Alami, the Director of the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Division at ESCWA, entitled “the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan”.

These findings are included in a [report](#) prepared annually on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and submitted to ECOSOC. This year, the resolution also included a paragraph on the situation of the Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons and a condemnation of Israel's detainment of the bodies of Palestinians.

The report will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in November, when another resolution on this pressing issue is expected to be adopted.

IV. WORLD BANK ANNOUNCES US\$ 17 MILLION PROJECT TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAZA YOUTH

On 13 August, the World Bank issued the following [press release](#):

The World Bank announced a new project today to provide Gaza's unemployed youth with short term income support. About 4,400 targeted youth, half of them women, will be hired by NGOs to deliver services in severely needed areas such as health, education and support to the disabled and elderly. As part of the US\$17 million grant, the new project will finance skills training and internet-based job support to an additional 750 youth.

The [Gaza Emergency Cash for Work and Self-Employment Support](#) project will target unemployed young people between the ages of 18 to 34. The project will work with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have solid track records in delivering social services to especially vulnerable communities, and not-for-profit organizations that provide support for freelancers in the digital economy.

*Economic instability and the absence of jobs hinders Gaza's educated youth from contributing to economic growth. Half of the labor force is unemployed and basic services like water and electricity are on a steep decline -- conditions that foster social unrest," said **Marina Wes, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza**. "Job creation and youth employment are at the core of our strategy. This project is in line with one of the major goals of our assistance, to provide economic opportunities, particularly for youth and women."*

The project will provide grants to selected NGOs to hire young people who have been unemployed for at least one year, prioritizing the poor and most vulnerable households included in the Ministry of Social Development's Cash Transfer Program. The project will also provide not-for-profit organizations with grants to train young people in the skills needed to become online freelancers, in turn equipping them to start their own e-businesses. These skills include software development, website design, translation and even simpler tasks such as transcribing scanned documents and data gathering.

*"In response to the dire situation, the project is designed to give temporary relief by providing income support to youth and their families, and by addressing overstretched social services," said **Samira Hillis, World Bank Program Leader for Human Development**. "The process will generate a multiplier effect when youth earn income while providing much needed social services to vulnerable households, thus contributing to their own well-being but also to the poor communities in Gaza."*

More than half of the population of Gaza, about 900,000, is poor. This includes around 300,000 people in deep poverty who are unable to cover their needs for food, clothing and housing. Young people in Gaza face particularly bleak prospects, with unemployment rates above 50%. Unemployment rates for young women are especially severe, with rates of 88% as opposed to 58% for young men. The project puts great emphasis on young women in Gaza, requiring that they represent at least half of the youth targeted for short-term employment and digital skills. The objective is to provide young women with valuable work experience that will increase their employability, and create flexible opportunities for internet-based work.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES REPORT ON PROTECTION OF THE PALESTINIAN CIVILIAN POPULATION PURSUANT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ES-10/20

On 14 August, UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following [report](#) pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20. Below are the observations included in the report:

....

49. The protection of civilians is a critical component in maintaining peace and security and in the prevention agenda that I laid out in May 2017, which prioritizes United Nations action to help countries to avert the outbreak of crises that take a high toll on humanity, undermining institutions and capacities to achieve peace and development. As detailed in the present report, the United Nations is already undertaking many protection initiatives. However, the measures taken fall short of the protection concerns for the Palestinian civilian population mentioned in General Assembly resolution [ES-10/20](#). While the underlying solution for all protection challenges is political, until such a solution is achieved, Member States may further explore all practical and feasible measures that will significantly improve the protection of the Palestinian civilian population. Such measures will also improve the security of Israeli civilians.

50. In accordance with international human rights law, everyone must uphold and ensure respect for the right to life. While allowing States to take actions necessary for protecting their security, international law, including principles that are codified in the Fourth Geneva Convention, obliges all States and non-State parties to a conflict to ensure respect for the sanctity of life, including through the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality. The targeting of civilians, particularly children, is unacceptable. I call upon all concerned to refrain from any act that could place civilians in harm's way. I remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, not to make civilian infrastructure the object of attack, to respect and protect medical personnel, and not to direct attacks against hospitals and other medical facilities, as recalled by the Security Council in its resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#). Those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable.

51. After more than 50 years of Israeli military occupation, Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip remain particularly vulnerable to violence, intimidation, loss of property and income, and various violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The combination of a prolonged military occupation,

constant security threats, weak political institutions and a deadlocked peace process provides for a protection challenge that is highly complex politically, legally and practically. Operations in Gaza also face difficulties for security and financial reasons. All duty bearers have responsibilities for the protection of Palestinian civilians in accordance with the applicable law. As detailed in the present report, the United Nations will continue to employ means to protect Palestinian civilians under these challenging circumstances.

52. Even in the current absence of a final status agreement, opportunities are also available for increased efforts by the United Nations to mediate and facilitate understanding with regard to the protection of civilians and critical civilian infrastructure, as well as with regard to incremental steps leading towards the resolution of political stalemates. The expansion of existing protection mechanisms to prevent and deter future violations could be explored, including but not limited to the deployment of additional political affairs, human rights and coordination officers to enable enhanced monitoring, situational analysis and coordination of protective presence and protection responses. The deployment by the United Nations of armed military, armed or unarmed police forces or unarmed observers, whether military or civilian, would require a United Nations mandate and the consent and cooperation of the relevant parties on the ground.

53. It is crucial that ongoing United Nations efforts to ensure Palestinians' protection, safety and well-being be maintained and strengthened, particularly in the light of the current financial shortfalls faced by humanitarian and development agencies on the ground, in particular UNRWA. I urge all Member States to step up their financial contributions and political support for these efforts.

54. I reiterate the call that I made before the Human Rights Council in 2017, that we must speak up for human rights in an impartial way, without double standards, not allowing them to be instrumentalized as a political tool, while upholding the rule of law and the need for justice and accountability. I call upon all Member States to work with me and with the parties to help them to secure their rights and to fulfil their obligations in full equality and humanity and in accordance with international law.

55. Support for efforts to return Gaza to the control of the Government of the State of Palestine, in line with the principles of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Quartet, is critical to the long-term protection of Palestinians in Gaza and the alleviation of the dire humanitarian and economic situation, through a lifting of the Israeli closures, in line with Security Council resolution [1860 \(2009\)](#). I strongly support the effort being led by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to fast track critical infrastructure projects in Gaza. This collaborative approach, which addresses the political, security, economic and humanitarian dimensions of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, exemplifies my vision of a United Nations system — humanitarian, development and political — working together to achieve shared political objectives.

56. Increased United Nations efforts, including through the Quartet, in support of achieving a lasting political resolution to the conflict are critical, as ultimately such a resolution is the only way to achieve the full protection of Palestinians. This tragedy underlines the urgency of revitalizing the peace process. It is only by realizing the vision of

two States living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the State of Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.

VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL WELCOMES ISRAEL'S RE-OPENING OF KEREM SHALOM CROSSING INTO GAZA

On 15 August, the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General issued the following [statement](#):

The Secretary-General welcomes the Israeli decision to reopen the Kerem Shalom crossing to its full operating capacity this morning and to expand the fishing zone off the coast of Gaza.

He is encouraged to see that those concerned have responded to calls to avoid the devastating impact of yet another conflict on the civilian population in and around Gaza.

The Secretary-General calls on all parties to support the efforts of United Nations Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov and Egypt to avoid an escalation and address all humanitarian issues in Gaza and the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza.

VII. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL BRIEFS EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE AGENCY'S ADVISORY COMMISSION

On 16 August, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, made the following [statement](#):

I welcome your participation in today's extraordinary session of the UNRWA Advisory Commission and wish to thank H.E. Ambassador Korkut Güngen for accepting to convene this session and for his presence here in Amman. This marks the initial stage of Turkey's role as Chair. I thank also the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this important session, which coincides with Jordan's role as Vice-Chair.

With a deep sense of responsibility, I called for this meeting today to urgently update you on the state of the Agency and its key priorities.

2018 has been a year of anguish for Palestine refugees, who have faced even more extreme pressures and anxieties.

Thousands of young people either lost their lives or were severely injured in the course of demonstrations in Gaza, and the threat of war has hung again over all its two million people.

Hundreds saw their homes destroyed or their families face forced displacement in the West Bank, while the issue of Jerusalem has remained profoundly contentious.

Tens of thousands were in shock following the last phase of devastation wrought on Yarmouk, which led to renewed displacement of large numbers of people, many for the second or third time in their lives.

And UNRWA was confronted with its worst crisis ever. For Palestine refugees throughout the region there seemed to be no hope and no horizon.

In previous meetings with you, I called the challenges and threats facing the Agency existential, and emphasized the need for UNRWA to protect its core work. I was always clear in saying that it would be a tremendous task to overcome this immense financial crisis – I don't need to remind the Members of the Commission that in January we were US\$ 446 million short of what we needed for 2018. My commitment however was that we would show great determination and leave no stone unturned in the search for solutions.

This meeting is an important moment to take stock of the results, so far, of our collective mobilization, through the Advisory Commission, in your respective capitals and during major conferences and summits in Rome, Dhahran, New York, and Istanbul.

I am very grateful to those countries, institutions and individuals who contributed to generating US\$ 238 million in additional funding in a six-month period. This is a remarkable and encouraging result that reaffirms the international community's commitment, and willingness to act on shared humanitarian concerns. I offer my profound respect to everyone who supported this effort, investing energy, creativity, as well as personal and political capital. That includes the donors who paid their contributions ahead of schedule, helping keep us running as we sought further support.

At the same time, we are by no means on stable ground yet. If you take into account the US\$ 10 million that we had to add to address the terrible health crisis resulting from the many injured demonstrators in Gaza, UNRWA's current shortfall is US\$ 217 million. Specifically, we still need US\$ 123 million for our Program Budget activities, the core of UNRWA's response and US\$ 94 million for our Emergency Appeals. These are considerable amounts, without which operations cannot be ensured until the end of the year.

The critical funding gap forced us to take painful measures of reduction in our Emergency Services in the West Bank and Gaza. These decisions were taken because we have run out of funding for Emergency Programs in these two fields; let me stress, though, that the situation has Agency-wide implications.

I must emphasize the dramatic impact these measures have had on staff members who lost their jobs and others for whom part time arrangements were necessary. In particular in Gaza, where unemployment rates are extremely high and alternatives very difficult to find, I truly regret that we had no choice under the circumstances, and no other solutions could be found. And I understand that affected colleagues felt a need to express deep frustration and anger.

I am aware that occasionally there is a feeling that UNRWA may at times be overstating the risks associated with service reductions. Let me make clear, it took the loss of just over 100 jobs in Gaza and related services to the community for our compound to be stormed by

protestors. For twenty-one days UNRWA's management and staff could not access our Gaza Field office which many of you have visited.

It was necessary to take these difficult steps in order to protect vital UNRWA services benefitting Palestine refugees. For example, the Agency managed to preserve the food distributions for 1 Million people in Gaza. This remains a key priority and that we have been able to maintain the intervention after an immense loss of income is a significant achievement.

Today, despite all the difficulties we are facing, I wish to announce my decision to open UNRWA schools for 526,000 students in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. This is another major priority. It reflects UNRWA's deep commitment to protecting the dignity of Palestine refugees, the core of its service delivery and its mandate.

The schools will open on time - teachers and students will return to their classrooms as planned – because it is crucial to protect the fundamental right to education for Palestine refugee girls and boys and the community's unwavering attachment to learning and the development of skills.

The schools will open on time taking into account the fact that host countries have repeatedly drawn attention to the serious risks to regional stability if this was not the case.

The schools will open on time to pay tribute to all our partners and donors who stepped forward at this time of challenge, either by advancing transfers of expected donations or by making new pledges and payments, and bringing us much closer to a successful resolution of the crisis. This tribute includes the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, whose investment and engagement have been outstanding.

While this is an important decision, dear colleagues, I want to remind us all that UNRWA still needs US\$ 217million, of which US\$ 123 million is needed to close the program budget shortfall. We are not out of the crisis by any stretch of the imagination.

We have just enough money to run Agency services until the end of September. Not beyond. So we are opening the schools, for all the important reasons mentioned, but we do not have any guarantee at this point that we will be able to keep them open throughout the end of the year, or in early 2019. We are taking a very significant financial and institutional risk and I wish to underline that the situation in 2019 will remain critical.

We will need the active engagement of hosts and donors to help cover the rest of the amount required. In that context, we will actively approach donors who made pledges of additional money but have not yet transferred it, as well as donors who have signaled an interest in supporting UNRWA at this critical time. It is essential that we build on and consolidate the successful response seen during the first part of the year.

For our part, I restate that UNRWA will take ongoing robust measures to safeguard the financial situation of the Agency. We will continue to be focused on reform initiatives and the identification of efficiencies. This is our necessary contribution to protecting the Agency and creating the environment conducive to trust and a growing number of partnerships.

There is also an urgent need for management, unions and staff to stand united and in solidarity in coming months. There has been remarkable internal cohesion during this demanding time and I wish to draw the attention of the Commission to the understanding that many staff have shown for the Agency's predicament and management actions, and to the constructive way that many ideas addressing the situation were put forward by staff.

I must however state that we cannot repeat the situation of loss of control of the compound and irresponsible statements by union leadership as was the case in Gaza. As shown in all other fields, we found solutions and steps forward through genuine dialogue between unions and management.

I commend the unions in the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and headquarters for their understanding of the Agency's challenges and for defending the rights of staff in a serious manner. Such attitudes and actions as were seen in Gaza – threats against management, intimidation of staff, mock burials, grave security breaches – are incompatible with our regulatory framework and general dignified behavior. They are unacceptable.

Staff affected by measures have the right to demonstrate. Let me repeat this: Staff affected by measures have the right to demonstrate. They have the right to challenge decisions, to ask for them to be reviewed. On the other hand, to interfere with the integrity of UNRWA operations and weaken the ability to manage our complex services is, again, completely unacceptable.

I repeat that UNRWA is facing existential pressures at this time. We need to robustly preserve our key services. We also need to ensure that UNRWA continues to manage the quality of services while making the best possible use of the money it mobilizes. When we face difficulties, we need to take measures to protect the most important services.

In doing so, we will keep the spirit and passion behind the #Dignity Is Priceless campaign alive. We were mandated to assist Palestine Refugees - and to protect their rights – until a just and lasting solution is found. We take that mandate very seriously. Opening the school year on time is a demonstration of that.

I thank you again for the opportunity to present these points to you and I look forward to comments from the members of the Commission and proposals to bridge what remains of the shortfall in 2018, and ensure the Agency sustains its operations through the end of the year without disruption. We must continue standing together and honor the responsibilities we have to maintain UNRWA's mission.

As always, I will convey a summary of recommendations and actions to Secretary-General Guterres and the upcoming UN General Assembly offers new opportunities to mobilize the international community.

I thank you for your attention and the opportunity to brief you.

VIII. HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS FOR GREATER PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS, HUMANITARIANS AND HEALTH WORKERS IN CONFLICT ZONES ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

On 17 August, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory issued the following [statement](#) on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day:

Today, I applaud the committed humanitarian workers in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), especially my national colleagues, who regularly face personal risk and assaults on their dignity, often while withstanding the same restrictive conditions that drive the humanitarian crisis in the oPt. Particular admiration goes to the health workers of Gaza, who, since 30 March, have exerted heroic efforts to treat people injured during demonstrations along Israel's perimeter fence. I mourn the deaths of the three Palestinian health workers who were killed in this context and am outraged by the injury of over 370 others, who risked their own lives while trying to save the lives of other Palestinians.

Overall, two million Palestinians in the oPt have been identified as being in need of active protection measures in 2018, due to exposure to conflict and violence, displacement or restricted access to livelihoods and essential services. In recent weeks, the lack of protection has been particularly evident during escalated hostilities between Palestinian armed groups and Israeli forces, which have again threatened civilians in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. As a result, since 1 July, we have seen the deaths of four Palestinian civilians, including that of a pregnant mother and her toddler child while asleep in their beds in Gaza, and the injury of two Israeli girls by rocket fire in Sderot, among some 100 Palestinian civilians and nearly 30 Israelis injured. In spite of this, the outside world appears numb to the tragedy unfolding.

Civilians on both sides continue to live in fear of another major escalation in hostilities, while civilians in Gaza are still attempting to recover from the previous escalations; 17,700 Palestinians remain displaced from the 2014 escalation alone. Of concern, in spite of credible evidence pointing to serious violations of international law during these hostilities, accountability for the victims remains elusive.

Protection concerns also continue in the West Bank, where many Palestinians in Area C, East Jerusalem and the H2 part of Hebron city endure occupation-related policies and practices that deprive them of their rights and generate pressure on them to leave their communities. Overall, the protection available to Palestinians in the oPt is growing weaker by year, resulting in a pattern of increased dependency on humanitarian assistance that will be hard to reverse.

This year, on World Humanitarian Day, I call on all actors to ensure that humanitarian workers are able to operate in line with humanitarian principles and free from restrictions and harassment. I call on Israel to uphold its obligations as an occupying power and for the Palestinian Authority and Hamas authorities to ensure they act in line with their obligations under international law. Finally, I join UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his call on countries to undertake credible and effective investigations into allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and to hold perpetrators to account.

IX. HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ISSUES URGENT CALL FOR US\$ 4.5 MILLION TO PREVENT LIFE-SAVING SERVICES IN GAZA FROM SHUTTING DOWN

On 20 August, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, issued the following [press release](#):

Life-saving services in the Gaza Strip rely heavily on donor-funded emergency fuel,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “We have now run out of funds and are delivering the final supplies in the next few days. Without funds to enable ongoing deliveries, service providers will be forced to suspend, or heavily reduce, operations from early September, with potentially grave consequences.”

UN-procured emergency fuel is delivered to some 250 health, water and sanitation facilities, mainly to power back-up generators that are required in the context of Gaza’s chronic energy crisis, which leaves the population with no more than five hours of electricity daily. Among the most vulnerable to shortages are 4,800 patients in Gaza’s hospitals, who rely each day on electrical devices in intensive care units, including newborns, and those on dialysis or in trauma departments. Medical services for over 1.6 million other Palestinians will suffer from reduction or cessation of services, due to lack of emergency fuel at the main health facilities, and over half the population face the risk of possible sewage overflow, if fuel runs out for the 41 main sewage pumping stations in the Gaza Strip. Overall, the reduced functioning of water and sanitation facilities risks an increase of waterborne disease and outbreaks in a densely-populated, urban area. US\$ 4.5 million is required to ensure that a minimum level of essential services can continue to run through the end of the year.

If donors intervene quickly, we can prevent a serious deterioration, such as a disease outbreak or other public health concern,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “But we need funding immediately to avoid the collapse of critical life-saving services,” he concluded.

X. PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ACCEPTS THE RESIGNATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON THE 2018 PROTESTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 22 August, the following [statement](#) was issued by the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC):

The President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Vojislav Šuc (Slovenia), was informed yesterday by Professor David Crane that he has decided to resign as chair and member of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory due to a personal circumstance that has arisen.

The President has accepted the resignation of Professor Crane, whom he appointed on 25 July this year, and is now considering next steps. The current members of the Commission are Sara Hossain (Bangladesh) and Kaari Betty Murungi (Kenya).

The Commission of Inquiry, established on 18 May this year by Human Rights Council [resolution S-28/1](#), is scheduled to present an oral update to the Council on 24 September 2018.

XI. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS DI CARLO BRIEFS QUARTERLY DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 22 August, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary di Carlo delivered the following statement at the quarterly debate of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question ([S/PV/8329](#)):

We meet today in the wake of yet another series of violent escalations that threatened to plunge Gaza into war. Over the past several weeks, Special Coordinator Mladenov has led unprecedented United Nations efforts with the Government of Egypt and other regional and international partners to prevent another devastating outbreak of hostilities, respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

The recurring violence highlights the urgency of that initiative. In several rounds of hostilities throughout the reporting period, Palestinian militants fired some 195 rockets and mortars towards Israel. On 7 August, one Grad rocket reportedly landed in an open field near the city of Beersheba — the furthest that a projectile has been fired since the 2014 hostilities.

Israel targeted sites in the Gaza Strip on at least 125 occasions. Eight Palestinians, including a pregnant woman and her 18-month-old baby, were killed, while 56 Palestinians and 28 Israeli civilians were injured. Such exchanges, which have escalated in recent months, underline the fragility of the interim periods of calm and the need for longer-term solutions.

In recent weeks, the humanitarian situation in Gaza also deteriorated further due, in part, to additional restrictions that Israel imposed on the movement of goods through the Kerem Shalom crossing. That was in reaction to the launching of incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza, which have burned thousands of acres of Israeli fields, forests and agricultural land.

On 15 August, Israel fully reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing and expanded the fishing zone to nine nautical miles. The Secretary-General welcomed the decision as having a significant impact on the struggling Gaza economy and on efforts to de-escalate the situation. However, on 19 August, Israel closed the Erez pedestrian crossing to the residents of Gaza and the West Bank, except for humanitarian cases, citing continued violent incidents at the fence.

As we work towards the full lifting of the closures on Gaza, in line with resolution 1860 (2009), I call on all parties to ensure that the urgently needed humanitarian supplies reach the Gaza Strip. Such supplies should not be held hostage to political and security developments.

I also reiterate the previous calls of the Special Coordinator to Hamas to provide full information on the Israeli nationals who are being held in Gaza, as required by international humanitarian law. The United Nations is taking steps to increase its capacity on the ground to better support energy, water, health and job-creation projects endorsed by the Palestinian Authority and the international community. I am pleased to note that many donors and international

organizations are looking into increasing their allocations for Palestine. That is the appropriate response to Gaza's crumbling infrastructure and collapsing economy. In particular, I am encouraged by the World Bank's increased \$90-million allocation for the West Bank and Gaza, including for some 4,400 short-term employment opportunities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also accelerating its emergency economic assistance programme with support from several donors. Both efforts focus on employment for women and young people as a priority. The UNDP programme aims to have 40 per cent of the resulting job placements for women — a critical step given that the unemployment rate for Palestinian women continued to be significantly higher than for men, exceeding 78 per cent in Gaza in the second quarter of 2018.

That follows the launch in May of the Decent Work for Women programme — a joint Italian, UN-Women and International Labour Organization initiative to promote equal and decent work opportunities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory — as well as the launch last April of a UN-Women project, funded by Japan, to support women in Gaza. Improving the socioeconomic status of Palestinian women is essential to peace and stability, as women remain more vulnerable throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Those are also important efforts to strengthen women's role in preventing conflict, in line with the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security.

However, I am deeply concerned that funding for United Nations emergency fuel, which sustains some 250 critical facilities in Gaza, has now run out. Approximately \$4.5 million is urgently required to ensure a minimum level of essential services up to the end of the year. Also of concern is a dangerously short supply of essential medicines, with 40 per cent of essential drugs completely depleted.

The United Nations is working with the Governments of Israel and Palestine on reviewing the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism to improve its functionality, transparency and predictability. The Palestinian Authority has also made great efforts to reassert its engagement in support of Gaza. I look forward to its full and active participation in that regard. I also welcome Egypt's continued efforts to facilitate intra-Palestinian reconciliation, critical to advancing not only Gaza's humanitarian and development objectives but also Palestinian national aspirations. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all parties to support those efforts.

We have been regularly updating the Security Council and its members on the unprecedented financial challenge that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces this year. The Secretary-General has warned that failing to address UNRWA's remaining \$217 million funding shortfall will have serious humanitarian and development consequences, as well as implications for regional stability. I thank Member States that have taken steps to assist in closing the shortfall and call on others to increase their support to UNRWA. It is imperative to maintain a strong collective mobilization.

Turning to the broader situation, violent incidents continue to take place throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. In Gaza, 13 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces during continued protests near the perimeter fence, including one medical worker and four children. Some 1,000 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were also injured. On 21 August, Israel's Military Advocate General announced that military police investigations would be opened into the deaths of two Palestinians killed during protests near the fence in recent months. While Israel has a duty to protect its citizens, it must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire and refrain

from using lethal force, except as a last resort. I further call on Hamas to avoid violence at the fence and refrain from putting children in harm's way. Children should never be targeted or instrumentalized in any way.

On 26 July in the West Bank settlement of Adam, a 17-year-old Palestinian stabbed an Israeli civilian to death and injured two others. He was shot and killed by one of the victims. It is deplorable that Hamas and others once again chose to glorify that attack. After a period of relative calm in Jerusalem, on 27 July, the one-year anniversary of the resolution of last year's unrest at the Holy Esplanade, clashes erupted at the site between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces, during which 10 Palestinians and four Israeli police officers were injured. On 17 August, an Israeli-Arab man was shot dead by Israeli security forces in Jerusalem's Old City, after attempting to stab them. Following both incidents, Israeli security forces closed the entrances to the compound for a few hours before restoring full access. With the celebration of Eid Al-Adha this week and the Jewish holidays approaching, I urge all to do their part to avoid provocations at Jerusalem's holy sites. The Special Coordinator conducted a series of meetings with Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders in Jerusalem to discuss the importance of maintaining calm, rejecting violence and ensuring the status quo is preserved at the holy sites. He will continue his engagement with all stakeholders.

On 14 August, Israeli authorities announced they would publish a tender for 603 units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement in East Jerusalem — the first such announcement since 2016. In Area C, a tender for 511 housing units was published and construction based on previously approved plans continued. On 1 August, the Israeli Civil Administration confirmed its intention to expand the municipal boundaries of the Amichai settlement to include the outpost of Adei Ad. If implemented, it would result in the first outpost legalization under Israeli law since 2014. I reiterate the long-standing position of the United Nations that all settlement activities are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

Israeli authorities demolished 18 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem for lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. As a result, eight Palestinians were displaced, including six children. On 1 August, Israel's High Court of Justice indicated that it had not found sufficient reason to prevent the demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar. It instructed the State to present an alternative relocation site, on which the parties have not agreed. Demolition is on hold while the Court considers the case. I reiterate United Nations calls on Israel to cease the demolition of Palestinian property and efforts to relocate Bedouin communities in the occupied West Bank. Such actions are contrary to international law and undermine the two-State solution.

I would like to conclude by highlighting the efforts of ordinary women and men — Israeli and Palestinian — who overcome cynicism and despair by taking tangible steps to promote tolerance and forge a shared future. They include volunteers who drive Palestinian patients to medical appointments in Israel; youth leaders who are finding creative ways to build a shared future among Jerusalem's communities; scientists working together to solve regional environmental challenges and Palestinian and Israeli women mobilizing constituencies for peace and promoting the participation of women in the political process, in line with resolution 1325 (2000). As outlined in the 2016 Middle East Quartet report (S/2016/595, annex), such initiatives provide a crucial foundation for broader peace efforts. I invite Member States to continue to generously support them. Even as the international community focuses on resolving the current crisis in Gaza and

returning a legitimate Palestinian Government to the Gaza Strip, the perseverance of those individuals reminds of the need to review our efforts in the context of our broader goal to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a future with two States living side by side in peace, security and dignity, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

XII. SECRETARY-GENERAL REGRETS US DECISION TO PROVIDE NO FURTHER FUNDING TO UNRWA

On 31 August, the following [statement](#) was issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

We regret the United States' decision to provide no further funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides essential services to Palestine refugees and contributes to stability in the region. The United States has traditionally been the largest single contributor to UNRWA. We appreciate its support over the years.

UNRWA enjoys the full confidence of the Secretary-General. Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl has led a rapid, innovative and tireless effort to overcome the unexpected financial crisis UNRWA has faced this year. It has expanded the donor base, raised considerable new funding, and explored new avenues of support. In addition, UNRWA took extraordinary internal management measures to increase efficiencies and reduce costs.

UNRWA has a strong record of providing high-quality education, health and other essential services, often in extremely difficult circumstances, to Palestine refugees who are in great need. The Secretary-General calls on other countries to help fill the remaining financial gap, so that UNRWA can continue to provide this vital assistance, as well as a sense of hope this vulnerable population.
