



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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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:*  
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## **I. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OPT CONDEMNS KILLING OF MORE PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS**

*On 2 October, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued the following [press release](#):*

The killing and wounding of more Palestinian protesters at the Gaza fence by the Israeli security forces is an ongoing affront to human rights and human dignity, said a UN human rights expert.

“The deaths of seven more participants in the Gaza demonstrations, and the wounding of more than 200 others, this past Friday indicates that the Israeli security forces are not heeding the international criticism of their use of lethal fire against Palestinian demonstrators, who appear to pose no credible threat to Israeli security forces,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Two of the Palestinians killed on Friday were boys aged 11 and 14. One Gaza-based human rights group, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, estimates that 163 of the injured demonstrators were shot with live fire.

Since the start of the Great March of Return on 30 March, more than 150 Palestinians have been killed during demonstrations near the Gaza fence by the Israeli security forces. More than 10,000 demonstrators have been wounded during this period, more than half of them by live fire. A number of the wounded have suffered devastating and life-long injuries.

“International human rights law imposes strict obligations on the use of force by law enforcement officials,” said Lynk. “Lethal force against demonstrators is absolutely forbidden unless strictly unavoidable in the case of an imminent threat to life or threat of serious injury. Many of those killed and wounded appear to have presented no such imminent threat.

“As I have said in previous statements regarding the recent violence at the Gaza fence, the killing and wounding of demonstrators, in the absence of any strictly-measured justification, and within the context of occupation, may amount to willful killing, which is both a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a war crime. It is also a serious violation of international human rights law and its protections for the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.”

The Special Rapporteur expressed hope that the recently-appointed UN Commission of Inquiry will be able to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the deaths and injuries in Gaza over the past six months. “Accountability is paramount in the global quest to advance human rights and to bring perpetrators to justice in accordance with the rule of law,” Lynk said.

## **II. UNRWA DEPLORES PALESTINIAN FATALITIES AFTER SIX MONTHS OF VIOLENCE ALONG THE FENCE IN GAZA**

*The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the following [press release](#) on 7 October 2018:*

On 28 September, violence in Gaza led to the death of seven Palestinians including two children, one of whom was an UNRWA student. This latest death brings to 13 the total number of UNRWA students who have been killed since 30 March 2018 in the context of the so-called “Great March of Return” demonstrations near the fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip. Many other children enrolled in UNRWA schools have been wounded in the demonstrations.

Between 31 March and 30 September, UNRWA’s 22 health centres across the Gaza Strip have provided 4,104 consultations for injuries sustained in the protests, more than 770 of which related to children. The majority of these (86 per cent) have been gunshot injuries, often resulting in serious bodily harm. Wounds can be dressed. But for casualties of such violence and all involved in their care, the effects are lasting; rehabilitation is often long, costly and uncertain.

UNRWA deplores the loss of life and the devastating impact that the deaths and injuries have on individuals and families. Every effort must be made to protect more effectively those who are exposed to this tragic situation.

The latest violence inflicts further pain and suffering on an already traumatized Palestine refugee population that has endured occupation, over a decade of blockade, and recurrent hostilities. In recent months, the deepening humanitarian crisis has further ravaged the Gaza Strip and stretched an already fragile health system to breaking point.

We are witnessing an extreme phase in Gaza, as living conditions – already intolerable – continue deteriorating. The sense of hope for its roughly two million people, 70% of whom are refugees, is receding. While all parties must take action to ensure further violence is prevented, rights and dignity are imperative for Gaza and the horizon of its people, in the context of a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## **III. UNESCO ADOPTS TWO DECISIONS ON PALESTINE BY CONSENSUS**

*On 10 October, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted two decisions ([205 Ex28](#) and [205 Ex29](#)) on the Middle East by consensus. A [press release](#) is reproduced below:*

It was again by consensus that the Executive Board of UNESCO adopted decisions on the Middle East this morning in the framework of the 205th plenary meeting. In the past year, all twelve decisions on the Middle East have been agreed upon after negotiation between the parties, facilitated by the UNESCO Secretariat.

UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, said: “I would like to commend the spirit of dialogue and the sense of responsibility that led to this result. A trend towards consensus is now emerging. It is based on the presence of all parties around the table at UNESCO and, of course, on

their goodwill. These factors have come together in recent months and have enabled the Secretariat to play to the full its role as mediator.

“I wish to thank those who have worked to achieve this, especially the representatives of the Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian delegations, and all members of the Executive Board who supported this agreement, as well as the European Union.

“More broadly, this result should encourage all Member States to work together, in a spirit of unity, even on the most difficult objectives. The desire to reach consensus is in the very DNA of UNESCO. I hope that it will continue to guide our work every day, in all of the governing bodies of the Organization.

“This outcome reminds us of the relevance of multilateralism and of our Organization, which was specifically created to foster international dialogue and cooperation. It reminds us of the need to sit around the table here at UNESCO and show goodwill. These are the foundations of the consensus reached again today. It is my heartfelt wish to see the trend observed over the past year sustained. The Secretariat stands ready to continue playing its part.”

#### **IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

*On 12 October, the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General responded to questions on the Secretary-General’s opinion of the Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov. Excerpts from the [daily press briefing](#) are below:*

In response to questions this morning about the Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, the Deputy Spokesman said that the UN Secretary-General fully supports the efforts of Special Coordinator Mladenov, who has been working tirelessly with all concerned parties, particularly with the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Israel to change the dynamics in Gaza – to avoid escalation, to support intra-Palestinian reconciliation and to address all humanitarian issues.

The Secretary-General hopes that relieving the humanitarian pressure in Gaza will reduce the tensions that risk a devastating armed conflict in Gaza and create space for the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to engage seriously with Egypt on reconciliation and the implementation of the 12 October 2017 Cairo Agreement. However, any humanitarian response to Gaza’s problems can only be temporary and limited in scope. What is needed is a political breakthrough that will restore intra-Palestinian unity under a single, legitimate national authority; a lifting of the closures in line with Security Council resolution 1860; and, ultimately, progress towards advancing a negotiated two-state solution based on relevant UN resolutions and previous agreements.

## **V. PROSECUTOR OF THE ICC ISSUES STATEMENT REGARDING EVICTION OF BEDOUIN COMMUNITY**

*On 16 October, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, issued the [statement](#) reproduced below:*

I have been following with concern the planned eviction of the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar, in the West Bank. Evacuation by force now appears imminent, and with it the prospects for further escalation and violence.

It bears recalling, as a general matter, that extensive destruction of property without military necessity and population transfers in an occupied territory constitute war crimes under the Rome Statute.

I am similarly alarmed by the continued violence, perpetrated by actors on both sides, at the Gaza border with Israel.

As Prosecutor seized of the situation in Palestine, I therefore feel compelled to remind all parties that the situation remains under preliminary examination by my Office.

I continue to keep a close eye on the developments on the ground and will not hesitate to take any appropriate action, within the confines of the independent and impartial exercise of my mandate under the Rome Statute, with full respect for the principle of complementarity.

## **VI. GA ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 IN 2019**

*The General Assembly decided on 16 October to confer additional rights and privileges of participation on the State of Palestine when it assumes its position as chair of the Group of 77 and China for the year 2019. The Assembly set out those terms in the Egyptian-sponsored resolution ([A/RES/73/5](#)) adopted by a recorded vote of 146 in favour to 3 against (Australia, Israel, United States), with 15 abstentions.*

### **73/5. Chair of the Group of 77 for 2019**

*The General Assembly,*

*Bearing in mind* the role and authority of the General Assembly as a principal organ of the United Nations and the importance of its effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its functions under the Charter of the United Nations,

*Recalling* its resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012 on the status of the State of Palestine in the United Nations,

*Noting* that the State of Palestine is a party to many instruments concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and has joined several specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations as a full member,

*Aware* that the State of Palestine is a full member of the League of Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Group of Asia-Pacific States and the Group of 77,

*Acknowledging* that it is for each group to define the modalities of its representation and leadership,

*Taking note* of the decision by the forty-second annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 of 27 September 2018 to elect the State of Palestine to chair the Group of 77 for the year 2019,

1. *Decides* to adopt the modalities set out in the annex to the present resolution for the participation of the State of Palestine in the sessions and work of the General Assembly and the international conferences convened under the auspices of the Assembly or other organs of the United Nations, as well as in United Nations conferences, for the duration of the chairmanship by the State of Palestine of the Group of 77;

2. *Requests* the Economic and Social Council, insofar as the rights concerned could be exercised by a Chair of the Group of 77 not a member of the Council, and other relevant organs, specialized agencies, organizations and entities within the United Nations system to apply the above-mentioned modalities for the duration of the chairmanship by the State of Palestine of the Group of 77;

3. *Invites* the Secretariat to continue to facilitate the work of the Group of 77 and its Chair, in line with the established practice;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the measures necessary to implement the modalities set out in the annex to the present resolution.

*20th plenary meeting  
16 October 2018*

## **Annex**

The additional rights and privileges of participation of the State of Palestine for 2019 shall be given effect through the following modalities, without prejudice to its existing rights and privileges:

(a) The right to make statements on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, including among representatives of major groups;

(b) The right to submit proposals and amendments and introduce them on behalf of the Group of 77 and China;

(c) The right to co-sponsor proposals and amendments;

(d) The right to make explanations of vote on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China;

(e) The right of reply regarding positions of the Group of 77 and China;

(f) The right to raise procedural motions, including points of order and requests to put proposals to the vote, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

## **VII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WARNS SECURITY COUNCIL “GRAVE SITUATION IN GAZA DEMANDS DECISIVE ACTION”**

*The Security Council, at its 8375th meeting of 18 October was briefed by the Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, on the situation in the Gaza Strip. Excerpts of the Special Coordinator’s briefing ([S/PV.8275](#)) are reproduced below.*

Every month, I brief the Council on the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question. Every month, we speak of how continuing settlement construction and the demolition of Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank undermine the very foundations of the prospect of a sovereign Palestinian State. We condemn terror, violence and incitement that eat away at the trust between Israelis and Palestinians, and we call for unity and reconciliation. Every month, we appeal to political leaders on both sides to find their way back to the table for negotiations, to reverse the negative trends on the ground and to restore hope that it is through peaceful negotiations, not violence, that both Israelis and Palestinians will be able to live side by side, masters of their own fate.

Day after day, however, we see the situation on the ground slipping in a different direction. We see it sliding into a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and violence that does not serve peace; we see the international consensus on how to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict being challenged. Yet we all understand that without a negotiated resolution based on the final-status issues — as they have been defined by Israelis and Palestinians themselves — there can be no sustainable peace that realizes the national, historic and religious aspirations of both peoples. It is our shared responsibility to restore that prospect, to facilitate negotiations, to help the weaker party, to insulate the process from radicals and extremists and to show results.

Before I turn to the most urgent questions related to the situation in Gaza, I would like to begin with developments in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where violence is on the rise and the Israeli authorities have continued the demolition and confiscation of Palestinian-owned structures. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 39 structures were demolished or seized in the West Bank, including five in East Jerusalem, displacing approximately 33 people and affecting the livelihoods of over 100 others. Thirty-four of the targeted structures were in Area C, including five installed in solidarity with Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu, the Bedouin community at imminent risk of demolition and displacement. On 23 September, the Israeli authorities requested the residents of Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu to self-demolish their homes by 1 October or face demolition by the authorities, in line with the 5 September final ruling of the Israeli High Court. On 8 October, the authorities extended the validity of land requisition orders for roadwork to enable the demolition. The community was given one week to object to the order.

Khan Al-Ahmar is among the 18 communities located in or adjacent to the controversial E-1 area, where plans for new settlement construction would create a continuous built-up area between the Ma’ale Adumim and East Jerusalem, undermining the contiguity of a future Palestinian State. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, along with the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, the League of Arab States and others, have called on Israel not to go ahead with its plan to demolish the village. I once again join that call for a cessation of demolitions and other measures that run contrary to Israel’s obligations under international law.



All structures lacking permits from the Israeli authorities in Area C and East Jerusalem, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, are potentially subject to demolition. While the rate of demolitions has declined since the beginning of 2017, over 13,000 demolition orders are pending against structures in Area C, three-quarters of which are on private Palestinian land.

Meanwhile, on 14 October the Israeli Government reportedly approved the allocation of \$6 million for advancing the construction of 31 housing units in the Jewish settlement in Hebron, which would be the first new construction there in 16 years. I reiterate the longstanding United Nations position that all settlement activities are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

Violent incidents also continued in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Among those, on 7 October an Israeli man and woman were shot dead by a Palestinian man in the Barkan Industrial Area in the West Bank. The assailant fled the scene and the Israeli security forces are currently carrying out a widespread search operation in the area. On 12 October, a Palestinian woman was killed near a checkpoint south of Nablus; she had been injured by stones allegedly thrown by Israeli assailants. I extend my condolences to the bereaved families. Such incidents must be condemned in the strongest of terms, and I call on everyone to stand up to violence and condemn terror.

Settler-related violence is also a continuing concern. There were 23 attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians, resulting in 1 death, 12 injuries and property damage. To date in 2018, according to OCHA, over 1,600 Palestinian-owned trees have been vandalized across the West Bank. As the annual olive harvest begins, concerns are particularly high. I call on the authorities to ensure smooth access of Palestinian farmers to their land and that sufficient measures be taken to protect farmers and their property from attacks.

In recent weeks, protests at the Gaza fence have expanded to include night demonstrations. Hamas and other militants continued to send incendiary kites and balloons across the border, causing fires on the Israeli side. The Israeli Defence Forces have responded with riot dispersal means and live fire. Thirty-three Palestinians, including nine children, have been killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations and other incidents. Soldiers were meanwhile injured.

Intense clashes took place at the Gaza fence during Friday protests on 12 October, in which an estimated 20,000 Palestinians participated. Seven people were killed and over 150 injured by live fire on that day alone. Incendiary kites launched from Gaza started fires, an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated at the fence and a group of protesters breached the fence and entered Israeli territory on that day. In addition, overall during the reporting period, Palestinian militants fired two rockets that landed in Israel. Israel responded by launching 45 missiles and shells at sites in the Gaza Strip.

In the early hours of 17 October, Palestinian militants fired a rocket from central Gaza towards Israel that hit and significantly damaged a residential house in the Israeli city of Beersheba. The city, some 40 kilometres from Gaza and well beyond the ring of communities in the immediate vicinity of the Strip, can be reached only by medium-range rockets. After the 9 August Grad rocket that landed in the outskirts of Beersheba, that was the second projectile to reach such a distance since the 2014 conflict. Three Israelis were reportedly injured. A second rocket landed in the sea south-west of Tel Aviv. The Israeli air force responded with a series of air strikes, firing at several

locations, most of them identified as military sites around Gaza. One Palestinian militant was killed and at least two were injured in a strike on a group that was in the process of launching rockets.

On 11 October, the Israeli Defence Forces announced that they had destroyed another tunnel extending from near the city of Khan Yunis in Gaza, some 200 meters inside Israeli territory.

In response to violence at the fence, for the third time since March, on 7 October Israel reduced the permissible fishing area off the Gaza coast from nine to six nautical miles. Again on 17 October, following the rocket attack on Beersheba, Israel further reduced the fishing zone to three nautical miles and closed all crossings between Israel and Gaza.

I brief the Council today as we enter a pivotal phase in Egyptian-led efforts to overcome intra-Palestinian divisions. I would like to convey two very clear messages to the Council.

The first is that the situation in Gaza is imploding. That is not hyperbole; it is not alarmism. It is a reality. The World Bank recently warned that the Gaza economy is in free fall, with an official unemployment rate of 53 per cent and over 70 per cent among Palestinian youth. Every second person in Gaza now lives below the poverty line. All key indicators — humanitarian, economic, security and political — continue to deteriorate. We remain on the brink of another potentially devastating conflict — a conflict that nobody claims to want, but a conflict that needs much more than just words to be prevented.

As I have outlined in detail in recent months, the United Nations and its partners have engaged, in response to requests from several Security Council members, in an extraordinary effort to stabilize the situation in Gaza and prevent an escalation. We have done so in full coordination with Egypt and in full transparency with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The effort has aimed at avoiding war and facilitating a return to the informal understandings reached in 2014 to maintain calm. That will not only alleviate the suffering of 2 million Palestinians, but will give political leaders time to achieve progress in reconciliation. Since the beginning of this process, the United Nations has firmly held that we need to make every effort to return Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian Government.

But let me assure the Council that, barring substantial steps to reverse the current course, this precarious sense of calm is doomed to give way under the mounting pressure. It is already beginning to fray. Recent days have seen tensions and violent confrontations rising again. That should be of great concern to all of us. The gravity of the situation compels us to take decisive action.

The latest rockets that were fired from Gaza towards Beersheba are a dangerous escalation of the situation. Unfortunately, they also fit a pattern of provocations that seek to bring Israel and Gaza into another deadly conflict. It is our responsibility to do everything possible to avoid that outcome. I am afraid that there is no more time for words. Now is the time for action, and we must see very clear actions on all sides that de-escalate the situation. Otherwise, the consequences will be terrible for everyone.

My second key message is cautiously more optimistic. There is a growing consensus and determination among key international and regional partners on moving forward to defuse the powder keg that is Gaza. On 27 September, a ministerial meeting on the United Nations Relief and

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was held on the margins of the high-level general debate. Member States contributed generously to the Agency, raising some \$122 million. This very impressive collective international effort has prevented an immediate shutdown of key UNRWA services, including in Gaza. Nevertheless, a significant funding gap remains.

Also on 27 September, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) agreed on the implementation of an urgent set of humanitarian projects in Gaza. Those interventions are aimed at addressing the immediate energy, water, sanitation, health care and economic needs of the population. The goals are concrete, realistic and achievable. There is no discussion of projects such as airports, seaports or sea channels. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the State of Qatar for its swift and generous response to the AHLC call by providing some \$60 million for fuel to increase the supply of electricity in the Gaza Strip.

Relieving the humanitarian pressure on the ground will reduce the threat of escalation and give space for Egyptian-led efforts to return the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza. The Middle East Quartet has also endorsed that approach. Disengaging from Gaza, plunging it into another conflict or tightening the closures furthers the divide, with devastating humanitarian and political consequences for the Palestinian national cause.

I appeal to all Council members and to all friends of Israel and Palestine to join the United Nations in calling on all sides to step back from the brink. All parties must maintain their continued commitment to the 2014 ceasefire arrangements. Hamas and other militant groups must immediately and effectively stop all provocations and attacks, including rockets and mortars, IEDs, attempts to breach the fence, incendiary balloons and kites and tunnel construction, and rein in all violence at the border. Israel must restore the delivery of critical supplies to Gaza and improve the movement and access of goods and people, and Israeli security forces must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live ammunition. The Palestinian Authority must not disengage from Gaza and must continue its engagement with the international community to help alleviate the suffering of its people in Gaza. Any effort by any party to block the provision of critical assistance designed to relieve humanitarian suffering must not be tolerated.

These steps are only temporary and aim at avoiding war. We must never forget that, at its heart, Gaza is not a humanitarian problem. It is a political problem. Humanitarian efforts are taking place in coordination with and in support of Egyptian efforts to bring Gaza back under the full control of the legitimate Palestinian Government. The Government's return to Gaza and the lifting of the suffocating movement and access restrictions are necessary for addressing not only the humanitarian and economic needs of the population in a sustainable manner, but also the very important political challenges ahead.

In addition to the unification of all Palestinians under one single, legitimate Palestinian National Authority, the bigger picture must also be addressed — an end to the occupation and the realization of a two-State solution based on relevant United Nations resolutions, with Gaza as an integral part. Make no mistake — the consequences of failure would be severe, just as the benefits of success would be profound.

...

In closing, let me reiterate that we must break out of the endless cycle of emergency responses and stop-gap measures. The Palestinian people — whether they live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in Gaza, or as refugees in the region — deserve sustainable and just solutions, just as the people of Israel deserve peace and security. Both deserve to have their national dignity and identity respected and to build a better future for themselves and their families. Palestinians deserve to be masters of their own fate, to be governed by democratically elected institutions, to have a State of their own that lives in peace and security with the State of Israel — without the walls of occupation, without the fear of reprisal or displacement, and certainly without the fear that the entirety of their lives will be spent struggling with no end in sight.

### **VIII. CHAIR OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ADDRESSES SECURITY COUNCIL AT ITS OPEN DEBATE**

*The Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), Ambassador Cheikh Niang of Senegal, also addressed the Security Council at its 8375<sup>th</sup> meeting and open debate of 18 October. Below is his statement ([S/PV.8375 \(Resumption 1\)](#)):*

At the outset, I would like to commend Bolivia for the efficacy with which it is guiding the work of the Security Council this month, and for its unwavering support to the Palestinian cause and a two-State solution, as demonstrated throughout its term on the Council and by its recognition of the State of Palestine in 2010.

Today's open debate gives us an opportunity, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to appeal once more to this organ charged with the maintenance of international peace and security to act and redress the ever-deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. That is all the more urgent because, 70 years after the Arab-Israeli war and 51 years into the Israeli occupation, we still do not have a clear political horizon for achieving a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict.

The expansion of Israeli settlements, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), undermines not only the contiguity of Palestinian territory but also the Palestinian people's basic rights. In addition, the occupying Power has also persisted in its attempts to forcibly displace Palestinian civilians and seize their land. In that regard, we deplore the plans to demolish the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar, a violation of international humanitarian law that has rightly been condemned by major sections of the international community. The Committee also deplores unilateral measures likely to undermine the international consensus on final status issues, including that of Jerusalem.

In a recent report, the World Bank declared the socioeconomic situation on the Gaza Strip to be in "free fall", and that does not take into account the ongoing deterioration of the situation on the humanitarian front, all of which are factors that risk provoking a new military escalation. The Committee therefore calls on all sides to exercise restraint and de-escalate tensions. In that context, while supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its staff, who are often exposed to serious threats, the Committee renews its urgent call to all Member States to continue and step up their support to the Agency in order to ensure that it has the sufficient, predictable and lasting resources it needs to guarantee the continuity of the vital services it provides to Palestine refugees. The Committee also urges Israel to lift its 11-year

blockade of Gaza, and calls for a reconciliation between Palestine's politicians with a view to reunifying their people.

While the international community remains paralysed, the current demonstrations have resulted in many civilian casualties among Palestinians, including children, particularly in Jerusalem and at the Gaza fence. Because we continue to believe firmly that violence can never resolve this conflict, the Committee supports efforts to create an expanded multilateral framework aimed at reviving the peace process on a basis of the long-standing platforms in this area, with a view to arriving at a two-State solution. The Committee believes that as an international community, we must reconsider the way in which we collectively assume our responsibilities with regard to the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, the daily violations of the 86 Security Council and 705 General Assembly resolutions represent a threat to the credibility of the United Nations and the rule of law.

The high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session presented a majority of the world's leaders with an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to multilateralism and to stress the central role of the United Nations in resolving the Palestinian question. We are pleased to note that, today, 139 Member States have officially recognized the State of Palestine. The Committee encourages those who have not yet done so, in particular members of the European Union, to follow that trend in order to demonstrate, as they did with the State of Israel, their commitment to international legitimacy and the two-State solution.

The Committee welcomes the adoption of resolution 73/5 by a significant majority of the General Assembly. The resolution provides temporary additional prerogatives to the State of Palestine, which will assume the annual chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China beginning in January 2019. The chairmanship of the Group, which includes of 134 member States, is a further noteworthy testimony to the growing confidence that the international community places in Palestine.

If we want to safeguard our collective action, then we must put our money where our mouth is and put an end to the historic injustice suffered by the Palestinian people and promote the two-State solution, based on the pre-June 1967 borders, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

## **IX. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CAUTIONS DRAMATIC FUNDING SHORTAGES THREATEN A “SEVERE CATASTROPHE” FOR GAZA**

*On 23 October, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Jamie McGoldrick, described the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in a [UN News interview](#):*

In an interview with UN News, he recounted that on a visit to a local children's hospital, he witnessed power shut down during an emergency operation, leaving patients and doctors in the dark for nearly a full minute before a generator powered on.

“In that time the doctors had to hand pump the oxygen into the lungs of children on life support machines,” he recalled. “And that's not one day. That's everyday like that.”

Funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine ([UNRWA](#)) was cut by the United States at the beginning of this year, which despite a major fundraising drive, has resulted in a critical shortage of services for the local population.

UNRWA reports that three-quarters of the 1.9 million people living in the enclave of the Gaza Strip, controlled since 2006 by militant group Hamas, are Palestine refugees. The steady decline in socio-economic conditions from decades of conflict and displacement, has seen unemployment rates soar to 53 percent, one of the highest in the world, with 80 percent of the population dependent on foreign aid.

“We’re not able to save the lives of people we should... while the money stays the same or goes down, the needs go up,” he stressed.

Mr. McGoldrick said humanitarians are having trouble keeping up with this “severe catastrophe.”

The expert added that the future of the crises does not look promising, due to the unstable funding climate and a geopolitical reality that “could even be worse” next year.

Pointing toward solutions, Mr. McGoldrick implored politicians from different Palestinian factions and parties, as well as Israel, to come up with answers, as it is “the only option” for the people of Gaza to regain independence, otherwise, there is “no hope,” he said.

## **X. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OPT URGES ACTION TO STOP ISRAEL’S ANNEXATION IN WEST BANK**

*On 24 October, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued the following [press release](#):*

A UN human rights expert said it was high time the international community takes firm action to stop Israel’s annexation of large parts of the West Bank through settlement expansion and legislative initiatives, warning that failure to do so will likely prompt Israel to formalise annexation into domestic law.

“During five decades of the occupation, Israel has steadily entrenched its sovereign footprint throughout the West Bank,” the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory said. Michael Lynk, in a [report](#) to the UN General Assembly, highlighted settlement construction and expansion, as well as recent legislative measures he said amounted to illegal de facto annexation.

“The Israeli Knesset has adopted a number of laws in the past year that have become a flashing green light for more formal annexation steps,” he said, noting recent measures that sought to apply Israeli law to the West Bank, as well as the 2017 settlement regularisation law.

“The strict prohibition against annexation in international law applies not only to a formal declaration, but also to those acts of territorial appropriation by Israel that have been a cumulative part of its efforts to stake a future claim of formal sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory.”

The Rapporteur urged the international community to act. “Lacking in repeated condemnations of Israel’s annexationist actions have been any meaningful steps by the international community to insist upon accountability. Despite Israel’s record of non-compliance with the directions of the international community, it has rarely paid a meaningful price for its defiance, and its appetite for entrenching its annexationist ambitions has gone largely unchecked,” Lynk said.

“A deep-rooted problem at the heart of this conflict has not been lack of clarity of international law – in fact it is quite clear, but the unwillingness of the international community to enforce what it has proclaimed.”

Describing the human rights situation in Gaza as dire, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the continued economic and humanitarian deterioration and ongoing demonstrations in which more than 200 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces.

“The United Nations stated in 2012 that Gaza may well be unliveable by 2020. When electricity has been cut to five hours a day, when safe drinking water has almost disappeared, and when its economy is cratering before our eyes, then the state of unliveability is upon us, and the international community must insist that all parties, and particularly Israel, the occupying power, bring an immediate end to this disaster.”

## **XI. SECRETARY-GENERAL DEPLORES DEATHS OF THREE PALESTINIAN CHILDREN IN GAZA AS RESULT OF ISRAELI AIR STRIKE**

*On 29 October, the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General responded to questions on the Secretary-General’s reaction to the deaths of Palestinian Children in Gaza. Excerpts from the [daily press briefing](#) are below:*

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Spokesman: The Secretary-General deplores the deaths of three Palestinian children last night as a result of an Israeli air strike near Gaza. The targeting of children or exposing them to risks leading to violence is utterly unacceptable. His thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims. He appeals to all to refrain from any act that could lead to further casualties, in particular, any measures that could place children in harm’s way.

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