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**Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and
the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

Security Council
Seventy-fourth year

Identical letters dated 24 January 2019 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you today to once again to convey our grave concerns about the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. We reiterate our appeal to the international community to give this matter due and urgent attention, as we urged yet again during the recent open debate of the Security Council on 22 January.

As affirmed in the briefing by the United Nations Special Coordinator, Nikolay Mladenov, and as reflected in reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies present on the ground, the start of the new year has witnessed the continued decline of the situation, exacerbating the already dire conditions arrived at by the end of 2018.

In contempt of the Security Council and in breach of its unambiguous obligations under international law, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to escalate its unrelenting barrage of repressive, disparaging and illegal measures against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Such impunity is clearly being emboldened by the failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for its violations, a failure that has undoubtedly enabled the perpetuation of this illegal, colonial foreign occupation. But this is not a preordained or irreversible situation; the international community can and must uphold international law and ensure accountability aimed at alleviating the plight and suffering of the Palestinian people and at ultimately bringing an end to this illegal occupation and historic injustice.

In this regard, in addition to our constant calls for action to bring a halt to Israel's illegal colonization and usurpation of our land, we must also call once more for urgent action to address the profound humanitarian crisis that is being inflicted by the occupying Power on the Palestinian civilian population. In particular, Israel's



inhumane, unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip continues to impose severe isolation and deplorable humanitarian, human rights and socioeconomic conditions and must be brought to an end, in compliance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

This blockade is adversely impacting the viability of all aspects of life. Economic, health, education and other societal indicators reveal the magnitude of the humanitarian suffering that has been deliberately inflicted by the occupying Power on the Palestinian civilian population in what definitely constitutes collective punishment on the scale of a war crime. The traumatic impact has been vast, sparing no family and particularly affecting the most vulnerable, including women and children, as well as older persons, disabled persons and persons with medical illnesses.

Poverty remains rampant in Gaza, with more than 53 per cent of the population now living below the poverty line and dependent on food aid for basic survival. Restrictions on imports and exports continue to undermine livelihoods, ensuring that unemployment rates also remain high. According to the World Bank, “unemployment (in Gaza) has reached 54 per cent in the second quarter of 2018, with over 70 per cent of young people and 78 per cent of women unemployed, with food insecurity reaching a staggering 68 per cent”.

Health standards continue to decline as the health-care system is falling into disrepair and many medicines and other vital medical necessities are either in short supply or no longer accessible. This decades-long blockade on Gaza has also created conditions for spikes in certain illnesses and diseases, particularly malnutrition and anaemia, which have become widespread. Doctors in Gaza and the West Bank are at this moment facing a critical shortage of antibiotics that has led to an antibiotic resistant “superbug” epidemic. The shortages in power, clean water and fuel, serious crises in and of themselves, have also fostered an environment that allows for a global health security threat, such as this “superbug”, to emerge and easily spread, with far-reaching implications if left unaddressed.

Palestinian civilian casualties also continue to be caused by the excessive, indiscriminate and lethal force being used by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, particularly against unarmed protesters in the Great March of Return, in grave violation of their human rights. Children continue to be greatly affected, constituting over 20 per cent of the total number of those injured by the occupying forces, which has surpassed 29,000 persons. In this regard, due to the Israeli blockade, a number of non-threatening injuries have tragically resulted in casualties because of long delays on the borders and stringent crossing procedures that have obstructed access to medical treatment not available in Gaza.

This inhumane, unlawful situation, which amounts to a most extreme form of collective punishment, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, continues to cause widespread humanitarian suffering and human misery and has severely undermined the ability of the population to cope with the immense socioeconomic, physical and psychological impact of the Israeli occupation, which they have borne for over a half century, deepening despair and diminishing hopes for a peaceful, better future.

The same is true for the Palestinians living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, who continue to bear the brunt of Israel’s unrelenting, illegal colonization practices, which are infringing on countless human rights, imposing widespread hardships and destroying hopes as well as the viability of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders. In this regard, in his 22 January briefing to the Security Council, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process forewarned that, “As 2019 begins, we should have no illusions about the dangerous dynamics of

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continue to unfold before our eyes... Over time, the possibility of establishing a viable, contiguous Palestinian state has been systematically eroded by facts on the ground.”

These illegal “facts on the ground” – whether the settlements, the wall or the more than 600,000 Israeli settlers transferred to our land – cannot be ignored or minimized as Israel, the occupying Power, in this manner continues to entrench its illegitimate occupation and advance its schemes to de facto annex our land. Moreover, it is clear that these illegal colonization policies are also at the root of Israel’s systematic perpetration of violation after violation, in grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, by which it is denying the basic humanity and dignity of the Palestinian people, denying them the right to live in freedom, peace and security, and oppressing the entire population.

We appeal to the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold their responsibilities to bring an end to this unlawful situation in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. The international community cannot remain silent as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its blatant defiance of its obligations and the repeated calls to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), which Israel continues to deliberately and provocatively violate without consequence. This lack of accountability is permitting the occupying Power to persist with its violations and crimes against our people and land unchecked, worsening the already-dire situation on the ground and inflicting more suffering, heightening tensions and further diminishing the prospects for realizing a peaceful solution.

At the outset of this year, we thus call once again for serious and responsible efforts, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions, international legal obligations and commitments made, to address this critical situation as a matter of urgency. Immediate action is required, in accordance with the long-standing international consensus enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, to alleviate human suffering, to restore hope to the Palestinian people and to salvage the prospects for a just, lasting and peaceful solution, which is in grave jeopardy.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 655 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 ([A/55/432-S/2000/921](#)) to 14 January 2019 ([A/ES-10/807-S/2019/45](#)) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations