



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  
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## **I. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CALLS ATTACK ON PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER HAMDALLAH'S CONVOY UNACCEPTABLE**

*The following [press statement](#) was issued on 3 January 2019 by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov:*

The stoning attack on Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah's convoy on Christmas is a very worrying incident. It is absolutely unacceptable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Stones can kill — it was at the same spot that, Aisha al Rabi, lost her life in October. Such violence must stop immediately.

## **II. SECRETARY-GENERAL MEETS WITH PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT ABBAS**

*On 14 January, the Office of the Secretary-General issued the following [readout](#):*

The Secretary-General met today with H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine.

The Secretary-General congratulated the State of Palestine for assuming the Chairmanship of the G-77. He expressed his wishes for a successful year for the Group.

The Secretary-General reiterated that the two-State solution is the only viable option to sustainable peace.

## **III. UNICEF WORKS WITH WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME TO HELP VULNERABLE FAMILIES IN GAZA**

*On 14 January, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP) issued the following [press release](#):*

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) have signed a new agreement to provide 6,000 of the most vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip with blankets, clothing and hygiene kits.

The joint initiative is designed to help poorer families – particularly children, women and elderly – cope with winter, following a sharp deterioration in the living conditions of many people living in the enclave.

Based on their level of need, families will receive credit of between US\$47 and US\$106 on their electronic assistance cards. The cash top-up will allow them to buy, blankets, clothing and children's school uniforms and hygiene items from contracted local retailers. Families benefiting from this programme will also receive awareness sessions on hygiene and on the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

“Ensuring the most vulnerable people in Gaza, particularly children, are able to meet their most pressing humanitarian needs during this winter season is critical,” says UNICEF's Special Representative in the State of Palestine, Genevieve Boutin. “Our partnership with

WFP to provide an integrated package of essential goods, services, and support aims to help address people’s vulnerabilities in an efficient and cost-effective manner.”

The new agreement also outlined the different ways WFP and UNICEF would deliver aid in the event of an emergency in Gaza, contingent on the availability of funding. It is modelled on the successful collaboration between UNICEF and WFP seen during and after the 2014 conflict in Gaza, when thousands of affected people were able to buy hygiene items, water, and clothing, as well as food, from local retailers using a single electronic card.

“WFP and UNICEF have been working together on several multi-sectorial initiatives that are vital to poor households, given the range of deprivation in Gaza,” says WFP Representative and Country Director Stephen Kearney. “Our innovative electronic voucher platform is ideal for providing a variety of assistance to vulnerable communities while injecting much-needed cash into a faltering economy.”

Economic hardship is on the rise in the Gaza Strip as the blockade and movement restrictions continue affecting trade and access to natural resources. This has made life harder for people in Gaza, as have cuts and delays in national social allowances and public servants’ salaries from the Palestinian Authority. Latest humanitarian indicators testify to growing challenges, as more than half of the population is affected by poverty (53 per cent), unemployment (55 per cent) and unprecedented food insecurity (68.5 per cent). Most vulnerable families living in deep poverty are surviving on less than US\$1 dollar per person per day, making uninterrupted humanitarian aid vital to their survival.

#### **IV. WORLD BANK APPROVES US \$12 MILLION TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE OF PALESTINIAN ENERGY SECTOR**

*On 14 January, the World Bank issued the following [press release](#):*

The World Bank approved a US \$12 million grant today to scale up the ongoing efforts to enhance the operational performance of key Palestinian energy sector institutions, and pilot a new business model for solar energy in Gaza. The new funding builds on the progress under the [Electricity Sector Performance Improvement Project](#) and expands the scope of activities to achieve its goals.

“Energy is an essential input to social services and human development and is even more critical in conflict affected areas. The World Bank will continue to support the building of a creditworthy and sustainable Palestinian electricity sector, addressing power supply constraints and achieving improvements in operational performance of the sector. In addition, scaling-up solar energy in Gaza will strengthen energy security critical for economic activity and people’s livelihoods,” said Anna Bjerde, World Bank Acting Country Director for West Bank and Gaza and Director of Strategy and Operations for the Middle East and North Africa Region.

The project was launched in early 2018 supported by a US \$4 million grant from the World Bank and US\$7 million in donor co-financing. The project has promoted two prominent initiatives to address energy shortages. One of the initiatives, the Revenue

Protection Program aims to improve operational and commercial management of large and medium customers by the installation of smart meters, particularly in the commercial and industrial sectors. With the increased revenues, the distribution companies will be able to scale up the quality and efficiency of their services, thereby generating a welfare gain to the society at large.

The second initiative, the pilot Gaza solar revolving fund was launched in October 2018. The fund finances the installation of rooftop solar systems for small businesses (SMEs) and households. The consumers repay the cost of the solar systems in monthly installment over two to four year period to make the systems affordable. Success of the revolving fund lies in the hands of families and business owners in Gaza. As they repay the cost for the installation, more people can receive solar systems through the revolving fund. A complementary Gaza solar for health initiative will finance solar rooftop systems for select hospital and health clinics.

“Increasing solar system installations in Gaza can provide an important safety net for meeting critical electricity needs. Protecting small and medium enterprises from electricity shortage is important to enable them to provide more jobs and contribute to economic growth. Overall, this scale up will further strengthen the efforts of the Palestinian Electricity and Natural Resources Authorities (PENRA) towards enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the economy,” said Monali Ranade, World Bank Senior Energy Specialist.

## **V. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONGRATULATES PALESTINE ON ASSUMPTION OF CHAIRMANSHIP OF GROUP OF 77**

*Following are excerpts of the Secretary-General’s [remarks](#) on 15 January at the handover ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 to the State of Palestine:*

...

I congratulate the State of Palestine as it assumes the Presidency of the Group of 77 and China for 2019. I welcome Your Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas and thank you for joining us today, as a clear demonstration of the strong commitment of the State of Palestine to an effective Presidency of the Group of 77 and China.

...

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the G77 and China in 2019 under the historic leadership of the State of Palestine.

Palestine and its citizens have first-hand experience of some of the most challenging and dramatic global issues we face. You are well-placed to take up the chairmanship of this important group of countries.

...

I would like to underline what was said by President Mahmoud Abbas, South-South cooperation is not to replace North-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is not for

the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to be forgotten. Commitments made there must be fully implemented. South-South cooperation is a form to complement and to enhance the impact of North-South cooperation.

...

## **VI. WHO WARNS OF HEALTH IMPACT OF FUEL CRISIS IN GAZA**

*On 21 January, the WHO issued the following press [release](#):*

The World Health Organization is concerned over the potential impact the evolving fuel crisis in Gaza might have on the lives and health of patients whose treatment requires uninterrupted power supply if no immediate solution to address the aggravating shortages is found.

The functionality of Gaza's 14 public hospitals is increasingly jeopardized by electricity shortages and the rapidly declining UN coordinated fuel reserves required to run emergency generators during prolonged electricity cuts from the main grid.

Several of the most severely impacted hospitals have already put rationalization measures in place and suspended sterilization, diagnostic imaging, cleaning, laundry and catering services during cut-off hours. Elective surgeries have been further reduced and drastic service reductions, including closures of wards and hospitals, are imminent, doctors and nurses in Gaza are warning.

Hundreds of patients, including newborn and children, whose life depends on the availability of dialysis services, incubators and ventilators in intensive care units, and other electrical life-sustaining devices, and those requiring surgical interventions will be directly affected.

“The acute fuel shortages are rapidly exhausting the last coping capacities of the health system in Gaza, which is struggling with chronic shortages of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and electricity. Without a quick solution to address the critically low emergency fuel supplies in hospitals, many of the most vulnerable patients will be put at risk. Following our visits to several affected facilities in Gaza to assess the situation firsthand, we call on all parties to de-politicize health and to collectively ensure that lifesaving services are sustained,” said Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, head of WHO office for the West Bank and Gaza.

Current fuel reserves are expected to sustain critical hospital services for only a few more days, depending on the number of hours of electricity cuts.

WHO calls on the local authorities in Gaza and on all parties and stakeholders to meet their responsibilities and to ensure the right to health and sustained access to essential health services for all patients.

## VII. BRIEFING BY SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

*The Security Council, at its 8449<sup>th</sup> meeting of 22 January, was briefed by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov. Excerpts from the Special Coordinator's briefing ([S/PV.8449](#)) are reproduced below.*

...

As 2019 begins, we should have no illusions about the dangerous dynamics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continues to unfold before our eyes. In the past few months, understandably, our focus has been on the tragic situation in Gaza. Today I would like to return to the broader questions of peace and a sustainable resolution to the Palestinian question.

Over time, the possibility of establishing a viable, contiguous Palestinian State has been systematically eroded by facts on the ground. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities advanced, approved or tendered over 3,100 housing units planned in Area C settlements, including plans for approximately

2,500 units that were advanced and tenders for about 650 others. Nearly half of them are to be built deep in the West Bank, many in isolated settlements in the Nablus area and near Hebron. One of the plans effectively legalizes the outpost of Ibei Hanahal as a neighbourhood of the Ma'ale Amos settlement in the Hebron governorate.

Meanwhile, we have seen additional attempts to pass legislation that would directly apply Israeli law to the territory of the occupied West Bank, raising fears of future annexation. In December, the Government endorsed a bill to advance the legalization of 66 illegal outposts throughout the West Bank within two years. In the interim period, authorities must provide the outposts with funding, electricity and other services and freeze the implementation demolition orders.

While in early January Israeli security forces evacuated dozens of settlers from mobile homes illegally installed at the site of the former Amona outpost, at the same time a Government team has been tasked with legalizing outposts and housing units built illegally in settlements, including under Israeli law. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Twenty-five structures were seized or demolished, citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. As a result, 32 people were displaced. With only 13 per cent of East Jerusalem designated for Palestinian construction and an estimated 13,000 outstanding demolition orders issued in Area C communities, demolition and displacement is a constant threat. I reiterate the United Nations longstanding position that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

On the Palestinian side, there are growing pressures on the foundations of the future Palestinian State, many of them imposed by decades of occupation and internal divisions. Despite the tireless efforts of Egypt and the United Nations, hopes for a genuine intra-

Palestinian reconciliation are fading by the day as the sides blame each other for the lack of progress.

As ever, ordinary Palestinians bear the brunt of the suffering. The gap between Gaza and the West Bank is widening again. The early January arrests by Hamas of dozens of Fatah members in Gaza were particularly alarming and led to the Palestinian Authority's withdrawal of its personnel from the Rafah crossing on 7 January. Those developments are a very serious blow to the reconciliation process. I call on Palestinian leaders to engage constructively with Egypt and act decisively to resolve the political impasse by ensuring the full implementation of the 2017 Cairo agreement. One thing is certain: Palestinian sovereignty and statehood will remain an impossibility without genuine unity. There can be no State in Gaza, and there can be no State without Gaza.

Meanwhile, economic growth in the West Bank is insufficient to keep the Palestinian economy afloat in the face of Gaza's dramatic economic contraction, the occupation and diminishing external support. The numbers speak for themselves — the West Bank gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 1.2 per cent in the third quarter of last year, while it contracted by 6.5 per cent in Gaza. As a result, the total GDP of Palestine contracted by 0.5 per cent in this period.

In other developments affecting Palestinian democratic foundations, on 12 December 2018, the Palestinian Constitutional Court declared the Palestinian Legislative Council dissolved and requested President Abbas to call for legislative elections within six months. I am concerned by the continuing vacuum of a functioning elected Palestinian legislative body until credible elections can take place.

There has also been a dangerous security dynamic unfolding in the West Bank over recent months, as a series of deadly terrorist attacks have taken place and the risk of destabilization has increased. The period witnessed an increasing number of Israeli military operations in Areas A and B of the West Bank. In Ramallah, for example, and elsewhere, the almost daily confrontations with Israeli security forces fuel anger and have raised questions among Palestinians as to the viability and relevance of the structures created under the Oslo Accords. Such operations disrupt the lives of civilians, increase tensions and undermine the Palestinian public's trust in their own security forces, as well as the morale of their personnel.

It has been over 25 years since Oslo opened a pathway to peace. The core of those agreements was long ago enshrined in a number of United Nations resolutions and bilateral agreements that remain valid to this day. They also define the final-status issues that can only be resolved through negotiations between the parties with the goal of a two-State outcome. Over time, however, those agreements have eroded as the prospect for credible negotiations has dimmed, only to be replaced by the lack of hope and the growing risk of a one-State reality of perpetual occupation, as outlined in the Quartet report of 2016 (S/2016/595, annex). If both sides were able to re-commit, with the support of the international community, to the basic tenets enshrined in bilateral agreements and to the principle that core issues can be agreed only through negotiations between the parties, that should provide hope for the future and impetus for peace and stability. A quarter of a century



of investment in peace and State-building must not be allowed to wither under the pressure of violence, radicalization and suffering.

The agreements and the principles that have been established over the past 25 years must be respected by both sides if peace is to have a chance. The Palestinian economy must be allowed to grow through expanding opportunities for free trade; fiscal leakages must be fixed by modernizing existing arrangements; and the Palestinian Government must be able to expand the services it provides to its people. Security coordination should also continue. Those are just some examples of small steps that can be taken to strengthen the Palestinian institution-building effort and that must be supported by the international community, including through the mechanisms of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC). Those steps are not an alternative to final-status negotiations, which can be based only on international law. They are not, and cannot be, an alternative to statehood. Engaging in them, however, should provide some of the much-needed political and economic space that people need in order to regain their faith in a peaceful and just resolution of the conflict. For the international community, it is also important to know that both sides remain committed to existing bilateral agreements and arrangements.

The challenging dynamics I mentioned are unfolding as violent incidents have continued in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Eight Palestinians were killed during the reporting period by the Israel security forces, including during demonstrations, clashes, military operations and other incidents. No Israelis were killed by Palestinians during this period.

Protests at the Gaza perimeter fence continued during the past month, with seven Palestinians killed by live Israeli fire. The launching of incendiary devices into Israel also resumed after a lull of several weeks, and two rockets were launched by militants towards Israel. I reiterate my call on Israel to use lethal force only as a last resort and in response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury. At the same time, Hamas in Gaza must also stop the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars and ensure that protests remain peaceful.

Meanwhile, the upsurge in settler violence over the past year continues to be a serious concern. On Christmas Eve, the convoy of Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah was attacked with stones in the same location that a Palestinian woman, Aisha Rabi, was killed by Israeli stone-throwers in October. I urge the authorities to uphold their obligation to protect Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and to hold accountable those responsible for such attacks.

I would like to turn briefly to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. While the current temporary boost in the electricity supply has led to a general improvement in living conditions, including a 40 per cent reduction in the need for United Nations-provided emergency fuel, the situation remains desperate. Recent funding cuts by donors have forced the World Food Programme to suspend food assistance to approximately 27,000 people and reduce rations to another 166,000 beneficiaries.

At the September AHLC meeting, member States emphasized the need for increased efforts to revitalize Gaza's economy, including through cash-for-work programmes. The

implementation of the package of urgent interventions continues. Donors have committed approximately \$90 million of the \$210 million needed for six months. Electricity supply to households has increased from three to 10 hours. About 4,200 jobs have been created and essential medicines have been delivered by the United Nations. I encourage donors to continue supporting our work, which is critical to avoiding another escalation.

Notwithstanding the enormity of the political challenges, the United Nations is working with the Palestinian Authority and all the relevant stakeholders to address some of Gaza's most pressing needs. The United Nations has also significantly enhanced its capacity to support project implementation on the ground. It is currently working with all key stakeholders to advance the package of socioeconomic and humanitarian interventions and to monitor ongoing projects. I urge donors to support all of our efforts. I would also like to take a moment to reaffirm our support for the critical work being done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in Gaza, the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and across the region. I also urge donors to continue their support for the essential services provided by the Agency.

...

Returning to the Palestinian question, I have said this many times, but let me repeat it once again — those who believe that the conflict can be managed in perpetuity are wrong. There is no status quo; there is only a deterioration that, if left unchecked, without a vision and the political will for peace, can lead only to endless conflict and the steady rise of radicalization on all sides. I am concerned that, within the current political landscape, those on both sides who seek to bridge the gap between Israelis and Palestinians are being undermined. Despite that, civil society continues to carry out critical work to find common ground and work towards resolving the conflict. Their efforts are inspiring and should be applauded and supported by all.

...

## **VIII. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER CONCERNED ABOUT ATTACK ON PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK VILLAGE OF AL MUGHAYYIR**

*On 29 January, the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, issued the following [statement](#):*

We are deeply concerned about the protracted and extremely violent attack on Palestinians in the West Bank village of Al Mughayyir last Saturday (26 January), during which a 38-year-old Palestinian father of four, Hamdi Taleb Na'asan, was shot in the back and killed.

The monitoring by our staff in the West Bank suggests that the killing took place after a group of up to 30 Israelis – some of them armed – from the nearby Israeli outpost of Adei Ad first of all attacked Palestinian farmers in their fields, and then descended on the village itself where they used live ammunition to shoot at the villagers and their houses.

The confrontation led to six villagers being shot with live ammunition, leaving three of them in a serious condition. It is unclear whether any settlers were also injured, and if so how many.

Although Israeli security forces were stationed near the village and were immediately alerted to the attack, witnesses informed our staff – who visited the village yesterday – that it took some two hours before they intervened.

When Israeli security forces did finally intervene, the main focus of their action appears to have been to disperse the Palestinian villagers using teargas. Three more Palestinians were injured by live ammunition after the intervention of the security forces. However it is not clear at this point whether they were shot by settlers or by soldiers. In total, 20 villagers were injured during the course of the day.

This violence took place in the context of a surge in settler violence in the West Bank, which has reached its highest levels since 2015. According to OCHA, the average number of violent incidents instigated by settlers per month increased by 57% in 2018 compared to 2017, and by 175% in comparison to 2016.

Israel as the occupying power, is obliged under international humanitarian law to protect the Palestinian population from such attacks. Those responsible for settler violence must be brought to account.

The Israeli security forces have opened an initial probe into the killing of Mr. Na'asan, and we welcome this. We urge the authorities to ensure there is a full investigation into his killing and the injuries caused to others, and that it is independent, transparent and effective.

## **IX. UNRWA CALLS FOR US \$1.2 BILLION TO FUND THE AGENCY IN 2019**

*On 29 January, UNRWA issued the following [press release](#):*

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, today called for a total of US\$ 1.2 billion to fund the Agency's vital core services and life-saving humanitarian aid for 5.4 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East. It is the amount needed to keep UNRWA operations at the same level as in 2018.

The presentation of the Agency's 2019 priorities and financial requirements comes in the wake of a remarkable global mobilization to overcome an unprecedented shortfall and existential crisis following the decision by the Agency's largest donor to cut US\$ 300 million of its contribution last year.

Mr. Krähenbühl paid a strong tribute to all UNRWA donor partners: "As we faced the most severe financial challenge in our proud history, it was both humbling and inspiring to have witnessed the extent and generosity of the response from host and donor governments, from within the United Nations and NGO partners, from civil society and individuals. I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude for this exemplary commitment and solidarity."

In 2019, Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, will continue to face a range of daunting human development and protection challenges. Central to these pressures is the way in which the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territory and the blockade of Gaza dramatically impact the lives of Palestine refugees. The effects of violence, incursions, lack of freedom of movement and employment opportunities, as well as increasing levels of food insecurity and psychological trauma are alarming and expanding. In Syria, the ongoing conflict has many acute consequences for Palestine refugees in the country and beyond, from displacement to loss of livelihoods, as well as the daily struggle to survive the immense adversity imposed by eight years of war.

“One of the greatest concerns for Palestine refugees is the current near complete absence of horizon, both political and personal. In the midst of this, it is essential to preserve the key services carried out by courageous UNRWA staff in some of the most difficult and polarized regions of the Middle East. My call is, therefore, to all our partners to sustain the generous funding levels achieved individually and collectively in 2018. At stake are the dignity and rights of Palestine refugee – in particular the right to education for 535,000 girls and boys – as well as regional stability and the defense of robust multilateralism,” said the Commissioner-General. “UNRWA for its part remains fully committed to maintaining its reform-mindedness and financial discipline.”

Some US\$ 750 million will be required to continue the Agency’s core services, which encompass education, health, and relief and social services and contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, US\$ 138 million will be required to provide emergency humanitarian aid to the oPt (Gaza and West Bank, including East Jerusalem) and US\$ 277 million will be required in support of the Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal (in Syria and for Palestine refugees from Syria in Lebanon and Jordan).

Additional funding is required for priority projects, particularly the need for construction projects resulting from conflict (Nahr el-Bared in Lebanon, and Gaza), as well as initiatives designed to complete programme reforms or strengthen programme delivery.

Mr Krähenbühl also addressed a message to Palestine refugees and UNRWA staff: “During the extreme crisis we faced last year, we promised to show maximum resolve and creativity. We lived up to that commitment and are proud of this. At the same time, we remember that the successful campaign to overcome the shortfall came with a cost. Some services were impacted and some staff members lost their jobs, which we deeply regret. Out of respect for the refugee community and UNRWA staff, we will continue to demonstrate absolute determination in mobilizing political and financial support for the Agency. We will also remain very honest about how difficult it will be and the fact that UNRWA will continue to face major challenges. We must remain united and show the cohesion that was such an important part of our success last year.”

**X. HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR, UNICEF AND UNESCO  
WARN EDUCATION IN WEST BANK BEING DEEPLY IMPACTED  
BY INTERFERENCE BY ISRAELI FORCES**

*On 30 January, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Special Representative Genevieve Boutin and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued the following [statement](#):*

As the second school term resumes in the State of Palestine, we remain deeply concerned by the high number of reported incidents of interference in or near schools in the West Bank since the beginning of the school year. These incidents are impacting children's safe access to education. Incidents of interference in schools by Israeli Forces, demolitions, threats of demolition, clashes on the way to school between students and security forces, teachers stopped at checkpoints, and the violent actions of Israeli forces and settlers on some occasions, are impacting access to a safe learning environment and the right to quality education for thousands of Palestinian children.

From January to December 2018, the UN documented 111 interferences to education in the West Bank affecting 19,196 children, an average of more than two violations every week. More than half of the verified incidents involved live ammunition, tear gas, and stun grenades fired into or near schools by Israeli Forces, impacting the delivery of education or injuring students. Nearly two-thirds of all verified interference incidents in West Bank schools took place in the last four months of 2018.

Currently, some 50 schools in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, are under threat of demolition. In 2018, five schools in the West Bank were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities, including Izbiq Community School north of Nablus, Al Semeye School south of Hebron, and the Abu Nuwar and Jabel Baba schools in East Jerusalem. Also, since mid-October 2018, the Sawiya al Luban school south of Nablus was closed for a day, and the Khan al-Ahmar village school, east of Jerusalem, remains under threat of demolition, along with the rest of the village. Orief secondary school for boys near Nablus has also been forced closed twice due to settler violence, and children from this school have been hospitalized with multiple injuries, including from gunshots. In the H2 area of Hebron, tear gas is regularly used around schools, and new measures are being applied at checkpoints that expose students and teachers to violence – at one particularly affected H2 school, more than 20 such incidents were documented in 2018.

Moreover, during military escalations from 11 to 13 November, schools in Gaza and in southern Israel were closed for at least one day, including four schools in Gaza that received minor damage, and one learning support centre and one kindergarten that both severely damaged.

Schools should be respected as places of learning, safety and stability. The classroom should be a sanctuary from conflict, where children can learn and develop into active citizens.

Children should never be the target of violence and must not be exposed to any form of violence.

## **XI. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR GLOBAL ACTION ON GROWING ISRAELI SETTLEMENT MOVES**

*On 30 January, the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, issued the following [press release](#):*

The international community must take decisive action in response to Israel's recent intensification of settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which amounts to a clear rebuff of a two-state solution, says a UN human rights expert.

“If these further settlements steps by Israel are left unanswered by the international community, we will be driving past the last exit on the road to annexation,” said the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk.

“The global community has repeatedly affirmed that the Israeli settlements are a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The settlements are also a presumptive war crime under the 1998 Statute of Rome, and as I have noted many times before, settlements are the source of a range of persistent human rights violations,” said the UN expert.

The last year has seen a marked rise in incidents of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. “In many cases, Israeli forces, obligated to protect the Palestinian population under international humanitarian law, stand idly by while olive trees are destroyed, livelihoods are damaged, and even while people are injured or, at worst, killed. The events in the West Bank village of Al Mughayyir on 26 January are a sobering example of this extremely troubling phenomenon, where a Palestinian villager was shot dead in the presence of Israeli settlers and soldiers. These incidents not only violate numerous human rights such as the rights to life, security of the person, and freedom of movement of Palestinians, but also serve to expand the area of land over which Israeli settlers have control,” Mr. Lynk observed.

“It is impossible to square the international community's rhetorical support for a genuine two-state solution with its persistent unwillingness to confront Israel with any meaningful injunctions to halt and reverse these steps towards annexation.

“The Israeli settlements are the engine of the 51-year long occupation. This occupation will not die of old age, but only with the resolute imposition of consequences on Israel for ignoring international law and numerous United Nations resolutions,” Mr. Lynk added.

The Special Rapporteur also highlighted that, on 8 January, Israel opened Route 4370, which links Jerusalem to the settlements north and east of the city. Dubbed the “apartheid road” by the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, it consists of two parallel roads – one for Israelis and the other for Palestinians in the West Bank – with a dividing wall between them.

Route 4370 is an integral part of the two-tier network of segregated highways in the occupied West Bank in support of the settlements. “I agree with human rights defenders who have pointed out that the road is part of Israel's long-term strategy to ensure contiguity

between Jerusalem and surrounding settlements, and to consolidate Israel's claim for sovereignty over Area C, which covers 60 percent of the West Bank.”

The Special Rapporteur also expressed alarm over the issuing of building tenders to construct settlement units. According to Peace Now, 3,154 tenders were issued in 2017. In 2018, that figure passed 3,800, the highest number since Peace Now began compiling data in 2002.

Mr. Lynk also criticized recent moves by the Israeli Government to expand existing settlements near Bethlehem and Ramallah, and condemned the threatened eviction of Palestinian refugees from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, where they would be replaced by Israeli settlers.

“The forced transfer of protected people under occupation is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime. It is also likely that it violates the guaranteed international rights to privacy and adequate housing,” he said.

“All these measures, together with recent Knesset legislation enacted with the purpose of legalizing settlement outposts in the West Bank and to allow for the confiscation of private Palestinian property, are not only illegal, but they contribute immensely to the immeasurable hardship experienced by all those living under this endless occupation,” Mr. Lynk added.

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