



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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**I. AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE OF DONORS, AT MEETING IN BRUSSELS,
CALLS FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC CONDITIONS
IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

On 3 May 2019, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the Foreign Minister of Norway, Ms. Ine Eriksen Sørreide, issued the following [Chair's Summary](#) at the conclusion of the Committee's meeting in Brussels of 30 April:

The members of the AHLC met today in Brussels. The donors expressed continued support to a negotiated two-State solution where both parties can live side by side peacefully as the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The meeting expressed deep concern about the current fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority, following Israel's decision to withhold around USD \$144 million annually of the revenues it collects on behalf the PA due to the Palestinian prisoner payments, and the Palestinian decision not to accept any clearance revenues, unless the entire transfers are reinstated. These clearance revenues amount to 60 percent of the PAs revenues, and the PA is currently implementing serious austerity measures that are not sustainable. The donors cannot fill this financing gap.

The economic conditions in the Palestinian territories have deteriorated from a standstill to a crisis. In 2018, falling growth slowed below 1 percent with a deep recession in Gaza and growth in the West Bank below its recent trends. Furthermore, the economy is now facing a severe fiscal shock because of the standoff of the transfer of clearance revenues.

The stability of the PA could be at stake if the current fiscal crisis is not resolved. Enhanced dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli governments is required to address the current crisis. The chair and the members of the AHLC are offering to assist the parties to adequately and urgently address the outstanding fiscal issues.

The meeting expressed deep concern that the situation in Gaza is unresolved. We have been on the brink of war several times during the last year. Contributions to avoid this by Egypt, UN, and others have been crucial. In addition, Qatar has been playing a major role in allowing for electrical supplies to be restored.

In order to address the situation and preserve the stability of the PA the following should be done:

1) The meeting urged the parties to enter into a serious dialogue, with assistance from the donors, to address a broad range of outstanding fiscal issues. We are prepared to facilitate contact between the parties. We urge the parties to present as soon as possible and before the next meeting of the AHLC a range of measures to increase the revenues of the PA in a serious way. Some such measures are already under work, and they should be continued and finalized. The Paris Protocol should be safeguarded by being updated and improved in its implementation. The committees established for revisions and improvements should be revived. In the meantime, the Protocol should be respected.

2) A collective effort is needed to bring the Palestinian economy on to a more sustainable path. This implies, as recommended in the reports to this meeting, a substantial revision and change of

the current access and movement regime both for the West Bank and Gaza. A reduction of the dual use list, increased permits to traders, removal of obstacles to Palestinian exports and quotas for imports, as well as allowing for increased Palestinian access to Area C, are among the necessary steps.

3) Donors need to cooperate and fund the UN humanitarian and economic package for Gaza, in coordination with the PA. The international community has responded. Improving the humanitarian situation in Gaza is essential, but also to start renovating the basic infrastructure. There is a need for more predictable energy supply to Gaza (short- medium- and long term) and the meeting supports efforts to reform Gedco [Gaza Electricity Distribution Company] to become independent. The meeting welcomed progress by the parties in implementing the Gaza Desalination Plant made in the side meeting this morning. Easing and lifting the closure regime, and enabling the PA's return to Gaza, should remain important goals underlying all our work there.

4) The AHLC reminded the parties of the urgency of implementing necessary measures for continuing corresponding bank relations.

II. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL KRÄHENBÜHL SENDS MESSAGE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES AND UNRWA STAFF

On 2 May 2019, UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl issued the following [statement](#) excerpted below:

Not for the first time in the history of Palestine refugees, time seems to be standing still, like suspended in anticipation of what may impact the community next. Over the past 70 years, Palestine refugees have been affected by multiple forms of injustice, denial of rights and opportunities, as well as by broken promises. They have waited for a political solution to be found and their plight to be ended. To date, in vain.

We now live in a time when the very fundamentals at the heart of the Oslo process appear to be challenged. The foundation of the two-State solution – which remains the international consensus – is being impacted by facts on the ground and in language.

There is growing reluctance – in relation to the West Bank, including East-Jerusalem – to use the word occupation. Yet, this is language enshrined in International Humanitarian Law, the Geneva Conventions of 1949, one of the most widely ratified international legal instruments on the planet.

Occupation is not an abstraction and its effects are not anonymous. It is characterized by military incursions, on average two a day in Palestine refugee camps in the West Bank, with disruptive search and arrest operations, home demolitions, the repeated use of tear gas and live ammunition. It creates a profoundly dehumanizing environment, where the simplest thing like children going to school becomes in certain areas, an action fraught with risks and defined by deeply humiliating experiences.

In the Gaza Strip, over the past year, a huge number of young people have been injured in what became known as the Great Return Marches. The fact that more people were wounded – over

27,000 in total and some 6,000 by use of live ammunition – in weekly and mainly peaceful protests than during the entire 50-day conflict in the summer of 2014, should have triggered stronger reactions and mobilization; as should the deaths of 14 UNRWA students, aged 11 to 16.

In Syria, while there is some relief among Palestine refugees that the most dramatic impact of the conflict may lie behind, there remains deep anxiety and concern about what the future holds. The question on everybody’s mind is: will a return to camps like Ein El Tal or Yarmouk be possible? In Syria we are dealing with another generation of Palestine refugees experiencing the trauma of displacement and loss on a grand scale.

In Lebanon, the cruel socio-economic conditions caused by limited rights for Palestine refugees and the wider pressures resulting from the conflict in Syria, contribute to more refugees leaving the country. This is a trend we have seen in Syria itself, as well as – albeit in more limited scope to date – from Gaza. In the absence of a genuine and inclusive political horizon, the number of Palestine refugees leaving the region is increasing and Europe is their destination of choice.

In this dramatic context, UNRWA has faced and will continue to face deep challenges and pressures of its own. The unprecedented financial crisis of 2018 saw the Agency forced to take some very difficult measures – with at times tragic personal consequences for staff members – as part of the strategy to preserve the vast majority of services. Thanks to the extraordinary mobilization of donors, hosts and other partners, as well as the support from the UN Secretary-General and many other leaders, ministers and senior officials around the world, we were successful in closing the greatest deficit in UNRWA’s history.

2019 began more positively, thanks to generous efforts by several donors to advance their payments, which will allow us to keep services running in uninterrupted fashion until early June. With our overall budget of US \$1.2 Billion, if all donors maintained their 2018 levels of funding, our needs this year would be covered. However, fundraising is never that easy and we are actively reaching out to donors to draw their attention to ongoing and critical funding pressures.

Specifically, we have informed our partners that UNRWA will start to face serious negative financial levels in June, immediately after the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. So we are using every big event, like the recent Arab Summit in Tunis, the Stockholm consultation and many bilateral contacts to try and preserve the successful mobilization of 2018.

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III. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR MCGOLDRICK CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE HALT TO DEMOLITIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM

On 3 May 2019, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, issued the following [statement](#):

“Demolitions in East Jerusalem have increased at a staggering pace over the last month, leaving tens of Palestinians displaced and others who have lost their livelihoods overnight,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “This must stop.”

As of 30 April 2019, 111 Palestinian-owned structures had been destroyed in East Jerusalem in 2019, either directly by the Israeli authorities or self-demolished by their owners to avoid hefty fines, following the issuance of demolition orders for lack of building permits. Of these, 57 per cent (63 out of 111) were demolished in April, bringing the total number of demolitions in the West Bank to 214 in 2019.

On 29 April alone, the Israeli authorities demolished 31 structures in multiple neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem; this is the highest number of structures demolished in a single day in East Jerusalem since OCHA began systematically monitoring demolitions in 2009. Overall, more Palestinians were displaced in East Jerusalem in the first four months of 2019 than in all of 2018, 193 compared to 176.

Of particular concern, on 30 April, Israeli security forces demolished four structures in the Wadi Yasul area of Silwan, forcibly evicting 11 Palestine refugees, including seven children, with an additional refugee family losing personal property. Five people were seriously injured by Israeli forces, who used beatings, stun grenades and sponge-covered bullets as residents tried to retrieve belongings prior to the demolitions. One man, whose home was destroyed, was injured with a sponge-covered bullet to his back and subsequently arrested. He was heavily beaten by Israeli security forces during the arrest and the transfer to the Israeli detention centre. He remains in custody. These demolitions were preceded by those of two other structures in Wadi Yasul on 17 April. Nearly all structures in Wadi Yasul face a heightened risk of demolition following the near complete exhaustion of efforts to protect homes in the area; over 550 people face the threat of displacement as a result, around a quarter of whom are registered Palestine refugees.

Some of the elderly refugees in Wadi Yasul who were originally displaced as a result of the 1948 conflict now face the prospect of losing their homes for the second time in their lifetime. For them and for the younger generations this cycle of loss is being perpetuated” said Ms. Gwyn Lewis, Director of West Bank Operations for UNRWA. As we have seen from the numerous cases UNRWA has responded to in the past, displacement, particularly for the most vulnerable, such as the elderly and children is extremely traumatic, destroys livelihoods, and separates families from their communities.

“As the occupying power of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel is obligated to ensure the welfare and well-being of the local Palestinian population,” said Mr. James Heenan, Head of OHCHR in the occupied Palestinian territory. “The implementation of the discriminatory Israeli zoning and planning regime cannot be invoked by Israel to justify any violation of international law.”

**Following original publication of this statement, confirmation of the arrested man’s release on bail was received. He has been ordered not to return to Wadi Yasul for a period of 14 days.*

IV. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR MLADENOV CALLS FOR GAZA DE-ESCALATION

On 4 May 2019, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#) on the situation in Gaza:

I am deeply concerned by yet another dangerous escalation in Gaza and the tragic loss of life. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of all those who were killed, and I wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

The United Nations is working with Egypt and all sides to calm the situation. I call on all parties to immediately de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months. Those who seek to destroy them will bear responsibility for a conflict that will have grave consequences for all.

Continuing down the current path of escalation will quickly undo what has been achieved and destroy the chances for long term solutions to the crisis. This endless cycle of violence must end, and efforts must accelerate to realize a political solution to the crisis in Gaza.

The current violence jeopardizes the significant progress made in recent weeks to relieve the suffering of people in Gaza, lift the closures, and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation.”

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL, FOLLOWING EVENTS IN GAZA WITH “DEEP CONCERN”, CONDEMNS ROCKET FIRE INTO ISRAEL, WARNING AGAINST FURTHER ESCALATION

On 5 May 2019, the Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following [statement](#):

The Secretary-General is following with deep concern the latest security developments in Gaza, and the risk of yet another dangerous escalation and further loss of life on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan.

He condemns in the strongest terms the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, particularly the targeting of civilian population centres. He urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint, immediately de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months.

His Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, is working closely with Egypt and all concerned parties to restore calm.

VI. OIC STRONGLY CONDEMNS ISRAELI AGGRESSION IN GAZA

On 5 May 2019, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued the following [statement](#):

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the aggression waged by the Israeli occupation forces on Gaza Strip claiming the lives of a number of Palestinian martyrs and injuring others. It considered this military escalation as a continuation of Israel's crimes and violations of the international laws, conventions and agreements.

The OIC also called on the influential actors in the international community to ensure international protection for the Palestinian people and compel Israel to stop its unjust aggression and to abide by the international law.

VII. UNRWA WARNS HALF OF THE POPULATION OF GAZA MAY NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD BY JUNE

On 13 May 2019, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the following [press release](#) excerpted below:

At a time when Muslims around the world are observing the holy month of Ramadan, often characterized by the festive nature of its *Iftars*, in Gaza, more than half the population depends on food aid from the international community. Unless UNRWA secures at least an additional US \$60 million by June, our ability to continue providing food to more than 1 million Palestine refugees in Gaza, including some 620,000 abject poor – those who cannot cover their basic food needs and who have to survive on US \$1.6 per day – and nearly 390,000 absolute poor – those who survive on about US \$3.5 per day – will be severely challenged.

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. From fewer than 80,000 Palestine refugees receiving UNRWA social assistance in Gaza in the year 2000, there are today over one million people who need emergency food assistance without which they cannot get through their day. “This is a near ten-fold increase caused by the blockade that lead to the closure of Gaza and its disastrous impact on the local economy, the successive conflicts that razed entire neighborhoods and public infrastructure to the ground, and the ongoing internal Palestinian political crisis that started in 2007 with the arrival of Hamas to power in Gaza,” said Matthias Schmale, Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza.

Moreover, the tragic death of 195 Palestinians – including 14 students from UNRWA schools and the long-lasting physical and psychological injuries of 29,000 people during the year-long demonstrations known as the Great March of Return – come after three devastating conflicts in Gaza since 2009, which resulted in at least 3790 deaths and more than 17,000 injuries combined.

A [report](#) issued by the United Nations (UN) in 2017 predicted that Gaza would be unlivable by the year 2020. Today, with over 53 per cent unemployment rate among Gaza's population and with more than one million people dependent on quarterly UNRWA food handouts, it is mostly

preventive humanitarian action of UN agencies, including UNRWA, and remittances from abroad that have held Gaza back from the brink of total collapse.

At a time of increased uncertainty about the future of the Israel-Palestine peace process, UNRWA is one of the few stabilizing elements in a very complex environment. By continuing to deliver upon its mandate, the Agency remains a critical lifeline in Gaza, where its services in health and education and its defense of rights and dignity are indispensable to the most of Gaza's 1.9 million inhabitants. Most urgent though is the food assistance that the Agency provides to counter the food-insecurity of more than one million Palestine refugees.

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VIII. WHO ADOPTS DECISION ON HEALTH CONDITIONS IN OPT

On 21 May, 2019 at the 72nd World Health Assembly, the following [draft decision](#) "Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan" was approved.

The Seventy-second World Health Assembly, taking note of the report by the Director-General requested in decision WHA71(10) 2018, decided to request the Director-General:

(1) to report on progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report by the Director-General, based on field monitoring, to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly;

(2) to provide support to the Palestinian health services, including through capacity-building programmes and the development of strategic plans for investments in specific treatment and diagnostic capacities locally;

(3) to ensure sustainable procurement of WHO prequalified vaccines and medicine and medical equipment to the occupied Palestinian territory in compliance with the international humanitarian law and the WHO norms and standards;

(4) to provide health-related technical assistance to the Syrian population in the occupied Syrian Golan;

(5) to continue providing the necessary technical assistance in order to meet the health needs of the Palestinian people, including prisoners and detainees, in cooperation with the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the health needs of handicapped and injured people;

(6) to support the development of the health system in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, by focusing on the development of human resources, in order to localize health services, decreasing referrals, reducing cost, strengthening mental health services provision and maintaining strong primary health care with integrated complete appropriate health services; and

(7) to ensure the allocation of human and financial resources in order to achieve these objectives.

IX. UNFPA RELEASES STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

On 21 May, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) issued a [study](#) on gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities in the West Bank and Gaza and the services available to survivors. The report's executive summary and main conclusions and recommendations follow:

Executive Summary

This study on GBV among women and girls with disabilities was conducted by UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) with the support of Denmark in the context of the GBV Sub-Cluster Strategy 2018-2020. It was based on a needs analysis and mapping of services offered to women and girls with disabilities aged 15 and older who are survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, particularly in view of the poor protection, care and social services available to women survivors of violence. Its objective was to map the available services; analyze major gaps and challenges related to service delivery; identify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and service providers, including stakeholder coordination, legislation and policies, capacity, prevention and response services, the referral process and accountability; as well as to make recommendations and propose interventions to address the weaknesses in the protection system for women and girls with disabilities in Palestine.

...

Main conclusions

With regard to the main conclusions of the study, the following findings and observations can be made:

Agreement is noticeable between the different stakeholders and in the available literature on violence at the international and local levels, confirming that women and girls with disabilities are the group most vulnerable to violence compared with their male peers with disabilities as well as with girls and women without disabilities. While disability may lead to increased violence, violence in turn may cause a new disability or may aggravate an existing disability and increase the severity of one's vulnerability.

The findings of the study indicated that an increasing proportion of women and girls with disabilities in the Palestinian territory experience various forms of psychological, social, physical and sexual violence. They often occur under the authority of a guardian and survivors are deprived of the right to make their own decisions, while experiencing discrimination, exploitation, abuse, isolation and exclusion from their families and the public sphere.

Women and girls with most types of disability experience different levels of vulnerability and marginalization due to a range of complex factors related to the composition of society, the prevailing culture, the structure of service delivery and discrimination on the basis of disability, violence and gender. Their vulnerability is further heightened by their limited awareness, low educational attainment, lack of resources and dependence on others, increasing the likelihood of experiencing higher levels and more severe forms of violence.

Significant obstacles and challenges remain in place, primarily in the form of the weak protection system for women and girls with disabilities; the absence of laws, legislation and public policy that would ensure their access to justice; limited service delivery to survivors of violence; failure to understand and respond to the special needs of women with disabilities survivors of violence; in addition to the fact that this vulnerable group is usually disregarded at the level of national and sectoral plans and overall policy directions in the Palestinian territory.

While protection mechanisms are weak in the Palestinian territory in general, Gaza Strip faces more significant challenges related to women and girls survivors of violence. These include the higher disability rate due to the ongoing siege, the recurrent wars on Gaza and the deteriorating political and economic conditions, which in turn increase the risk of violence for women and girls with disabilities in this region.

The findings of the study also demonstrated an apparent lack of ability on part of the survivors of violence to access information, programs and services from the different agencies and service providers in relation to prevention of violence, protection, recovery and others. In addition, mechanisms for reporting of violence against women with disabilities are ineffective in view of the ineffectual relevant laws and policies, societal barriers, limited public awareness, inadequate engagement of stakeholders in the protection system and the prevailing tendency to underreport all forms and levels of violence.

Society in general continues to adopt negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities. This becomes more prominent when violence against women and girls with disabilities is addressed; responses are usually shaped by stigma, blaming the survivor for the violence and fearing the repercussions of social disgrace. Therefore, community and family constraints make it very difficult for women to report and disclose the violent incident, especially in relation to physical and sexual violence.

Services offered to women survivors of violence are generally limited, fragmented, disintegrated and seasonal. They are concentrated in major urban areas and generally lacking in rural areas and Palestinian camps, and are inadequate to cover the needs for and requirements of protection and care. They fail to consider accessibility needs of the target groups and their specific characteristics, such as geographic distribution, disability type and others. This situation indicates an almost complete absence of appropriate, integrated, comprehensive and sustainable programs and services.

Similar to the West Bank, services in Gaza Strip are limited, fail to take in account the special needs of women with disabilities, are concentrated in certain areas compared to others and are not easily accessible by persons with disabilities. Gaza service providers face an increasing demand by their target groups and lack the capacity to respond to urgent needs due to the prevailing situation in Gaza and the resulting wide range of challenges. Women survivors of violence are usually known to face much more difficulties in accessing services in an environment of enduring conflict.

Many stakeholders report obvious weaknesses in the capacity of service providers, particularly in terms of scarcity of services and programs targeting women with disabilities survivors of violence, as well as the lack of specific policy and procedures for service delivery to this particular group, poor staff qualification and training, and the lack of basic access requirements, such as the

required adaptations and accessibility of public facilities and points of service delivery, which hinders women's and girls' access to the needed services.

Interventions made by various service providers to ensure protection of women survivors of violence are inadequate in terms of their role and effectiveness. This observation applies to the Directorate of Social Development, which has the formal responsibility for the national social care system, as well as the Family Protection Units in the Civil Police and other legal and judicial bodies. Women survivors of violence frequently have to deal with ineffective laws and legislation and inadequate role of law enforcement and justice institutions in providing them with protection. Often the intervention is limited to conciliation and a routine, non-deterrent procedure, such as taking a pledge from the perpetrator to stop the violence. Consequently, the survivor will return to the same setting and risk being exposed to the same dangers once again. The lack of attention to prevention and post-exposure recovery services contributes to an increasing incidence of violence and heightened severity in general.

Mechanisms for coordination, networking and information sharing among service providers are weak and the roles and responsibilities of certain stakeholders are unclear, adversely affecting the ability to offer integrated services and undermining referral and sheltering services for survivors of violence. These factors increase the suffering of women with disabilities survivors of violence.

Clear mechanisms for monitoring, oversight and quality control of service delivery are lacking. There are no policies or procedures in place to develop quality criteria for services offered to this particular group or to assess satisfaction of beneficiaries and their families. Furthermore, there is an absence of oversight procedures to ensure that service providers abide by best practices and that survivors of violence are protected and receive the needed services with dignity, equality and independence.

Summary of recommendations and proposed interventions

The study makes a number of recommendations and proposes actions to enhance the protection and care system in the Palestinian territory by developing a clear national strategy for the protection of women and girls with disabilities survivors of violence, enhancing the relevant laws, public policies and operating procedures, raising the level and quality of service delivery, and taking all required procedures and measures to ensure beneficiaries' access to information, protection programs and services offered by the public and NGO sectors, law enforcement bodies and justice institutions.

The proposed interventions also include enhancing the capacity of beneficiaries and different stakeholders to engage in efforts to combat violence and report the different cases of violence, developing the capacity of staff and working teams to offer disability-friendly services, providing an inclusive and accessible environment in service delivery points and institutions, offering referral and sheltering services to survivors of violence, and organizing community-based campaigns and initiatives to address the root causes of violence against women and persons with disabilities, including gender inequality and discrimination on the basis of disability and gender.

**X. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR MLADENOV,
UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL KRÄHENBÜHL
BRIEF SECURITY COUNCIL**

On 22 May 2019, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, and the Commissioner-General of the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl briefed the Security Council and made the following statements, excerpts of which appear below ([S/PV.8532](#)):

...

Mr. Mladenov: Just a few short weeks ago we teetered on the precipice of another devastating conflict, as we witnessed the most intense fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza since 2014. The United Nations worked intensively with Egypt and all sides to calm the situation, but Israeli and Palestinian lives were tragically lost. My sincere condolences go out to the families and friends of all those who were killed, and I wish a speedy recovery to the injured. While the situation has now stabilized, it remains very tense. One thing is clear: these dangerous cycles of escalation and de-escalation are not sustainable in future.

Thousands of Palestinians participated on 3 May in the weekly demonstrations at the Gaza perimeter fence. Incendiary balloons were launched, and stones and pipe bombs were thrown at Israeli soldiers, who responded with live fire, rubber bullets and tear gas, killing two Palestinians and injuring 49. Later that day, a sniper, reportedly from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, fired across the fence, injuring two Israeli soldiers. In response to the sniper attack, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched several tank shells, while the air force targeted military sites in Gaza, killing two Palestinian militants and injuring two civilians. That was the beginning of the most serious escalation since 2014.

Over the course of the following 48 hours, 650 rockets were fired from Gaza. While approximately 240 projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome system; several houses, two kindergartens, a school and a hospital in Israel were directly hit. Four Israeli civilians were killed and over 200 were injured, according to the IDF. During the same period, the Israel Defense Forces reported that it had hit over 300 Palestinian militant targets in Gaza, including a senior Hamas official, who was targeted and killed by an air strike. According to sources in Gaza, 25 Palestinians were killed and over 150 were injured.

After intense efforts by the United Nations and Egypt, a cessation of hostilities was established as of early morning on 6 May, ending the escalation. I take this opportunity to once again urge all sides to use this period to reduce tensions, solidify the fragile calm and commit to implementing the understandings established in the past few months.

Sniper fire from Gaza has been a constant threat that, on at least four occasions over the past year, has pushed both sides closer to confrontation. This latest incident followed a pattern that has been well established — the closer we get to consolidating an understanding that would relieve the pressure on people in Gaza and reduce the risk of rocket fire towards Israel, an incident like the last one occurs and undermines our careful and painstaking efforts.

Despite that, the United Nations and Egyptian teams will continue to work intensely with all sides to use this window of opportunity to provide assistance to the people of Gaza and further reduce the risk of conflict. Sustained calm is also critical to supporting Egyptian-led efforts to advance intra-Palestinian reconciliation, which should enable the return of a unified, legitimate Palestinian Government to the Gaza Strip.

I take this opportunity to welcome Israel's decision to lift the ban on accessing the Gazan fishing zone and expand it to 15 Nautical miles in some places, reopen the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings as normal on 12 May and other steps taken in the past few days. I also welcome the renewed commitment by the Palestinian Government in Ramallah to engage constructively on addressing the situation in Gaza.

I also want to reiterate the call by the Secretary-General, who condemned in the strongest terms the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, particularly the targeting of civilian population centres, and also call on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from using lethal force against protesters, except as a last resort.

Turning briefly to the humanitarian situation, Deputy Special Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick has warned that health providers in Gaza are struggling to treat the high numbers of injuries sustained during the weekly demonstrations. Many of the wounded require complex surgeries not currently available there. Yet access to treatment outside of Gaza continues to be challenging, as the lack of consistency in the approval process is having very serious and negative implications on people.

Meanwhile, the international community has continued its efforts to address the dreadful situation in Gaza. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians met in Brussels on 30 April and reiterated its support for the implementation of a package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions in Gaza through the United Nations. Between October 2018 and April 2019, approximately \$112 million was mobilized, enabling a significant increase in electricity supply through the Gaza power plant, the creation of thousands of temporary jobs in Gaza and the delivery of essential medical supplies and other support for the struggling health sector. Fuel deliveries for the power plant have been extended. As I speak, we are moving forward on other more sustainable efforts for the energy sector, with a focus on renewable energy. On 13 May, I visited the second-largest hospital in Gaza, where a landmark World Health Organization-developed solar power plant project will cover a substantial part of the energy needs of the hospital.

I appreciate the financial support provided by Japan and many others for those critical projects. I urge other donors to further increase their support for our joint efforts to improve the situation on the ground. The most significant contribution to date remains that of the State of Qatar. On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the assistance provided by Qatar, without which the situation in Gaza would have been untenable. On 6 May, His Highness the Emir of Qatar announced an assistance package for the Palestinian people of approximately \$480 million — \$180 million for Gaza, \$250 million as loans for the Palestinian Government and \$50 million as grants for projects in the West Bank. In relation to Gaza, some of that funding will allow the United Nations to provide fuel

for electricity until the end of the year, expand temporary employment programmes and focus on permanent job creation.

While Gaza continues to command significant attention, the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is of growing concern to all of us. The prolonged absence of a political horizon to resolve the broader conflict has coincided with a steady deterioration of the living conditions of Palestinians. That, coupled with violence, settlement expansion, demolitions of Palestinian property and the persistent threat of further economic decline, is creating an explosive mix that could have serious security implications.

Two hundred and forty Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces during the reporting period, including nine children, during demonstrations, clashes, security operations and other incidents in the West Bank. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), four Palestinians were injured or had their property damaged by settlers, while one Palestinian attack against Israeli civilians in the West Bank was recorded, resulting in one injury and damage to a vehicle. I unequivocally condemn all attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians and call on all sides to refrain from violence. All perpetrators must be accountable for their crimes.

Allow me to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. In that context, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 40 structures during the reporting period, displacing 31 people, overwhelmingly on the grounds of a lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

On 29 April, 31 structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, the highest single-day total monitored by OCHA since 2009. On 3 May, a joint statement by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) called for “an immediate halt to the Israeli authorities’ destruction of Palestinian-owned property in East Jerusalem”.

On the following day four structures were demolished in Silwan, displacing 11 Palestinians. According to OCHA, five people were seriously injured when Israeli forces reportedly beat and used stun grenades and sponge-covered bullets to push residents away as they tried to retrieve belongings prior to the demolitions. Moreover, in a worrisome move, Israel’s High Court of Justice upheld a new Israeli military order that accelerates the demolition process for new structures built without permits in Area C of the West Bank.

Regrettably, the reporting period saw no resolution to the Palestinian Authority (PA) financial crisis. For the third consecutive month, the Palestinian Government has refused to receive Israel’s transfer of any tax revenues less than the full amount owed to it. I am concerned that, despite the PA’s announced austerity measures and the support package committed by Qatar, the latter’s survival remains at risk.

I briefed the Council in March (see S/PV.8489) and said that the crisis would have a substantial impact on the Palestinian economy, with reduced purchasing power and

weakened growth. The first signs of that negative trend are already beginning to show. A long-term resolution of the financial crisis is urgently needed. Its continuation threatens to further destabilize an already volatile situation. Both parties should implement their bilateral agreements and avoid taking unilateral actions that undermine the stability of the Palestinian Authority. Against that backdrop, a team from the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process recently visited the Al-Fawwar Palestinian refugee camp, where the residents endure harsh living conditions and UNRWA's ability to deliver essential services is hampered by its own financial crisis. Commissioner-General Krähenbühl, who will also be briefing the Council today, will speak more on the severity of the current challenges facing Palestine refugees.

On a positive note, with the advent of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from the occupied West Bank were able to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the relative calm at the holy site and urge continued respect for the status quo and relevant agreements.

...

In conclusion, I would like to return to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The recent escalation in Gaza has once again demonstrated the urgency of solidifying and expanding the existing understandings on the ground. We must ask ourselves, how many more years will Palestinians in Gaza be forced to live on a pittance from the international community, under the control of Hamas, and suffer from Israeli closures? How many more years will Israelis be forced to run for shelters as rockets launched by Palestinian militants in Gaza rain down indiscriminately from above?

The United Nations and its partners have, yet again, tried to mitigate the impact of the crisis in Gaza, but those efforts will ultimately fail unless there is progress on resolving the Palestinian divide, lifting the closures and charting a course towards the two-State solution, based on long-standing international parameters, including the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements. There are no short-cuts to sustainable peace.

I also take note of the invitation by the United States and the Kingdom of Bahrain to convene Government, civil society and business leaders to discuss the potential for economic investments and initiatives that would be made possible by a future Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement and a solution to the final-status issues. Humanitarian and economic support is very important for people, but it is also critical for creating an environment conducive to viable negotiations. However, the solution to the conflict remains fundamentally political.

...

Mr. Krähenbühl: First of all, allow me to thank you, Madam President, for the invitation to address the Security Council. It is a particular honour to do so from Gaza.

I wish to emphasize and express heartfelt appreciation to the States Members of the United Nations — both countries hosting Palestine refugees and donors — for their extraordinary trust in and support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for

Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) since its operations began, in 1950. Together, we have significantly advanced several key Sustainable Development Goals for Palestine refugees, notably in education, health and beyond, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight.

Never was the support of Member States more remarkable than in 2018, when our Agency was confronted with its most severe funding crisis ever — a truly existential crisis. Forty-two different countries and institutions from all corners of the world, including Indonesia, Madam President, increased their contributions to UNRWA last year. On our side, we took a number of difficult internal measures and reduced expenditures by \$92 million. Through those combined efforts, last year we successfully overcame an unprecedented deficit of \$446 million. We are particularly indebted to the leadership of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the wider United Nations family, who resolutely stood with UNRWA every step of the way during those most challenging times.

The European Union became the Agency's single-largest contributor in 2018. I also wish to pay special tribute to Germany, the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Japan, Norway and many others, including permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, for their very generous contributions last year. Those actions were vital to keeping open the 715 schools that UNRWA runs for more than half a million female and male students in the West Bank, as well as in East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

More than 2 million students have graduated from UNRWA schools since 1950, where gender parity has long been achieved and we have included a human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance programme that is unique in the region. The generous support of donors also preserved primary health-care services for 3 million patients through our network of 140 health centres and, despite severe pressures, also preserved our emergency services for 1.5 million refugees, mainly in Gaza, the West Bank and Syria. At a time when Palestine refugees face a near complete absence of a political horizon, I am strongly convinced that preserving UNRWA's services is a crucial contribution in terms of human dignity and regional stability.

Speaking from Gaza, I must draw the urgent and renewed attention of the Council to the increasingly desperate situation faced by the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, of whom at least 1.3 million are Palestine refugees. My current visit has once again exposed me to the extreme hardship created by successive armed confrontations, blockade and violence. UNRWA is working alongside our United Nations and civil society partners to address that humanitarian crisis.

I think here of issues such as the lack of freedom of movement or employment opportunities, as well as the deep trauma created by the many casualties and persons injured from repeated wars and from what became known as the Great March of Return. Thousands of young people have been wounded, and hundreds killed, since March 2018, including 14 boys and girls, ages 11 to 16, who were students in UNRWA schools. As I have done in the past, I reiterate here my call for respect for international humanitarian law and my

condemnation of the targeting of civilians. That includes rocket firing from Gaza that has led to civilian loss of life and injuries in Israel.

Every family in Gaza has been impacted, and people speak of a level of despair that surpasses anything previously known to them, in particular in terms of what our health teams call an epidemic deterioration of mental-health conditions. After hearing many concrete examples during my visit today, it seems particularly important that UNRWA and other relevant actors be enabled to strengthen critically needed mental-health capacities.

Poverty levels among Palestine refugees continue to rise, and they rely on UNRWA in particular to meet essential food needs. For their sake and the stability of Gaza, we must ensure that our food distributions for 1 million people here in the Gaza Strip do not face any interruption. As we speak, UNRWA has only enough money to run its operations until mid-June; then we will hit negative figures and a funding gap. It is absolutely crucial to avoid a breakdown of our food pipeline, and I call on all our partners to actively mobilize in support of our efforts to secure the needed funding.

It is similarly essential that UNRWA be able to open the next school year on time in August and September. We are currently rehabilitating a large number of schools, but we need the funding to ensure that the education itself can be provided. Nothing sustains hope and opportunities more effectively than the education provided in our classrooms. I am deeply impressed by the courage shown by our students in overcoming the adversity they face and pursuing their studies. We need to match that courage with our ability to mobilize the necessary financial support. In Gaza alone, 280,000 girls and boys study in our schools. In the light of all the discussions on leaving no one behind, on safeguarding refugee education and preserving regional stability, we need to work together to keep UNRWA schools open and safe.

UNRWA faces important needs in the West Bank as well, including in East Jerusalem. Palestine refugees in the West Bank are confronted with multiple consequences of the ongoing occupation, such as home demolitions and evictions, with numbers significantly on the rise since early 2019, as well as movement restrictions and settler violence. There are also frequent military incursions in which live ammunition is fired, resulting at times in fatalities, but often in injuries and property damage in densely populated areas like Palestine refugee camps, where entire communities can be impacted by the live fire and the use of tear gas. I must in particular draw the attention of the Council to the growing pressure UNRWA itself has faced in East Jerusalem, with threats to interfere with our operations. The current developments in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, will further unsettle not only Palestine refugees, but also their hope and aspirations with regard to a two-State solution and their rights under international law.

In addition to strong political backing, in 2019 we require \$1.2 billion for all of our operations throughout the Near East. That is the exact amount we mobilized last year. In other words, if every donor should manage to maintain its level of funding in 2019, we should be able to cover our budget. I therefore humbly call on all of our partners to repeat their generous support and preserve the successful dynamic created in 2018. The upcoming pledging conference, to be held in New York on 25 June, will be an important opportunity

to that effect. For its part, UNRWA will continue to manage its operations with strong financial discipline and a determination to achieve further efficiencies.

Wars, armed conflicts and violence persist in the absence of effective political action to resolve them. It is political inaction — not the action of humanitarian organizations — that perpetuates conflicts. Nothing today would be more important than a renewed, genuine and inclusive effort to resolve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. I say that not because UNRWA was mandated to deal with the politics of the region — we were not — but rather because every single day, we deal with the increasingly severe humanitarian and human consequences of this enduring conflict. We do not believe that the future of Palestine refugees should be framed by another 10, 20, 30 or 40 years of UNRWA. They need and deserve a just and lasting political solution. Until then, however, we are determined to live up to the mandate that the General Assembly bestowed upon us.

When meeting with young students here in Gaza, I was again reminded that our efforts — with the Council’s support — are worth it every single day. In another remarkable example of talent and dedication, 15-year-old UNRWA student Jameela Abu Jom’a was declared the winner of the 2019 Inspirational Messages of Peace Contest by the United States National Park Service and International World Peace Rose Gardens. The competition celebrates messages of peace written by young people throughout the world. Yesterday I congratulated Jameela and told her that we are very proud that her message of peace will be on display in the gardens of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park in Atlanta, Georgia, for one year. That is what members of the Council and of the General Assembly have allowed us to achieve and preserve. For that, members deserve the highest recognition. From here in Gaza, I call on them to protect this vital effort and sustain their collective mobilization, in support of dignity, stability and robust multilateralism.

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XI. WORLD BANK ANNOUNCED US \$15 MILLION TO SCALE UP MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN GAZA

On 23 May 2019, the World Bank issued the following [press release](#):

The World Bank announced today an additional US \$10 million to scale up ongoing efforts to improve municipal services for Palestinians living in Gaza. In addition to the new grant, the [Third Municipal Development Project](#) will also benefit from US \$5 million in donor co-financing from the [Partnership for Infrastructure Development Trust](#) Fund. With the additional US\$15 million grant, the project will expand its operations to improve municipal performance and the delivery of services that millions of Palestinians in Gaza rely on.

“The economic contraction, along with reduced fiscal transfers and aid, are severely compromising the ability of the municipalities to continue rendering services in Gaza,” said Kanthan Shankar, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza. “The living conditions continue to be affected by the fragile and conflict affected context, resulting in severe unemployment and worsening poverty. The project aims to improve the conditions at the local level and maintain services for the Palestinian people in Gaza.”

Further deterioration of the already limited provision of local services will expose the population of Gaza to increased health and sanitation risks. One of the primary concerns is the potential health impact of mounting and decomposing solid waste in the very densely populated urban areas. Palestinians in Gaza are also exposed to safety risks from unlit and damaged streets and the degradation of the environment.

The grant will enable continuity and expansion of local services through labor-intensive, sub-projects in 25 Gaza municipalities. The new funds will finance sub-projects in roads, wastewater, solid waste management, parks and open space development, public markets, solar energy, and more. It is estimated that the expanded project will make a significant contribution to job creation efforts by generating about 5,000 much needed jobs.

The new activities will be driven mainly by the local governments that suffer the most from financial constraints. The different labor-intensive project activities are expected to be completed in a two-year timeframe with the goal of restoring services to the largest number of beneficiaries with immediate need. The Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), the implementing agency, will supervise the project and the selection of beneficiaries of the labor-intensive activities.

“In line with the World Bank assistance strategy for West Bank and Gaza, the new range of activities will strengthen the role of municipalities in sustaining local service provision and will generate employment opportunities in the process, particularly for women and youth with the highest unemployment rate,” said Chris Pablo, World Bank Senior Urban Development Specialist.

XII. ILO RELEASES REPORT ON SITUATION OF WORKERS OF OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

*On 24 May 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO) submitted its [report](#), *The Situation of Workers of Occupied Arab Territories*, to the International Labour Conference. Below are the report’s concluding observations:*

...

149. The last year has brought more bloodshed between Palestinians and Israelis than any other year since the 2014 Gaza war. Radicalism and violence are increasing on both sides. Prospects for Palestinian workers are grim. The fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority and the current donor climate make it unlikely that the economy can benefit from any stimulus in the near future. Rather, there are indications that it will descend into deep recession, with dramatic repercussions for the job market and Palestinian livelihoods.

150. The labour and employment situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories has continued to deteriorate. Labour force participation is low, unemployment rampant and the young are increasingly disengaging from a market which fails to deliver. Jobs are few and far between; women are the worst off.

151. Nowhere else is the situation of working men and women, or those aspiring to find work, as dire as in Gaza. If current trends continue, the majority of its labour force will soon be unemployed. Those who have a job often lack protection and a stable income. The 12-year-old

Israeli blockade has decimated Gaza's productive base and eroded employment opportunities. Gaza's economy is now in free fall. Under current conditions, it is unclear what, if anything, can halt the collapse. Unless cross-border mobility for workers and goods is re-established, no real improvement can be expected.

152. The Palestinians themselves have little scope to improve their destiny. The Israeli occupation is stifling in every respect, dominating almost every aspect of Palestinian life. More and larger settlements are emerging. Palestinian mobility, finance and trade are all effectively controlled by Israel. The situation is further compounded by the pervasive lack of reconciliation between the key Palestinian factions, which is one of the obstacles to advancing the cause of self-determination and statehood.

153. Governance and well-run institutions still matter, even in the context of continued conflict and an enduring occupation. The development of the Palestinian social security system, one of the most recent bricks in Palestinian state-building, is now stalled, and the institution is in disarray. Yet the protection of workers beyond the civil service employees is needed more than ever, both as a goal in itself and to boost the attractiveness of a private sector which remains anaemic.

154. Labour rights and other human rights have long fallen victim to the occupation. For most of the 127,000 Palestinians who work in Israel and the settlements, often the only—but crucial—benefit is the income they can retain. Conditions are frequently precarious, and humiliations are common. There is a thriving informal economy of Palestinians working in the settlements, for meagre wages without protection. Solutions are, however, at hand. Fundamental principles and rights at work must be respected, working conditions improved, and the permit regime for Palestinians working in Israel should be thoroughly reformed.

155. The occupied Syrian Golan regained global attention when its annexation was recognized by the United States. Syrian workers in the territory, which has been occupied for more than 50 years, have remained disadvantaged and often face discrimination. There appears to be little desire among the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan to integrate with Israel, as recent local elections have demonstrated.

156. More than ever, the peace process needs to be pulled out of its moribund state and given new life. The same goes for the stalled process of Palestinian reconciliation. In the absence of political progress on any front, there is little hope for meaningful and sustainable improvements in the labour markets of the occupied Arab territories. Continued conflict and tension will not serve the long-term needs of any side. Only dialogue and negotiation can. While the two-State solution appears in some quarters almost to be relegated to the history books, no credible alternative has emerged. Rather than being questioned or shunned, it should be fostered.

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XIII. UNICEF, WFP, SAVE THE CHILDREN ASSESS NUTRITION SITUATION IN GAZA

On 27 May 2019, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and Save the Children issued a joint, multi-sectoral [assessment](#) of nutrition of mothers and caregivers and their children in the Gaza Strip.

A protracted protection crisis continues in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which remains largely attributable to Israel's ongoing occupation, which is now in its 52nd year, the continuing internal Palestinian divide, and violations of international law. After years of a relative absence of armed conflict since the 2014 hostilities, there has been a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip in 2018. Poverty and unemployment affect more than half of the population, pushing food insecurity to a record high of 68.5 percent.

Nevertheless, no specific information is available on the nutritional status of the mothers/caregivers and their children under five and the impact of the ongoing crisis on their nutritional status and potential deterioration of infant feeding practices. Save the Children worked with the Nutrition Working Group, led by UNICEF with the support of the World Food Programme, to conduct a nutrition multi-sectoral assessment to determine the nutritional status and practices of pregnant and lactating women and children 0-59 months age in the most vulnerable communities of the Gaza strip.

The findings of the assessment show that a large proportion of the population has a sub optimal Food Consumption Score (FCS), with 23 percent of the households having a poor FCS. Approximately 80 percent of those having a poor FCS are receiving some form of humanitarian aid. The disaggregated consumption frequency of nutrient rich food groups in the selected communities shows a high proportion of households are not eating enough iron rich food groups, hence a high risk of iron deficiency anemia. The coping strategies of the population focus on the reduction of meals and variety of foods (71%).

We are alarmed by the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, that has been measured with 18 percent of pregnant women and 14 percent of lactating mothers found malnourished. This calls for urgent attention and possibly some rethinking and support to some nutritional programming.

With regard to children 6-59 months age, 4 percent were found acutely malnourished which is still below the emergency thresholds of WHO).

Caregivers have a general knowledge on recommended Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, but their practices are generally poor. More than 6 percent of infants have never been breastfed, and more than 55 percent of infants are not exclusively breastfeeding. Breastfeeding continuation at one and two years old is very low at 45 percent and 12.5 percent respectively. Bottle-feeding among the assessed population is extremely high at 41 percent, and the use of infant formula is more than 30 percent among infants less than 6 months. The majority households receive the infant formula through relief agencies. The mini-mum acceptable diet, a combined indicator that measures how much of the nutritional needs of the children are met, is at a dangerously low level of only 14 percent.

More than 40 percent of children less than five years old and two years old experienced Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), while almost 40 percent experienced diarrhoea. Less than half of these children sought medical attention. A further analysis was conducted to associate the sickness (diarrhoea and ARI) with the recommended breast-feeding practices among infants less than 6 months. The infants less than 6 months that were not exclusively breastfeeding were found to be twice as likely to be affected by diarrhoea and ARI, compared with those exclusively breastfeeding.

WASH practices show that majority of the respondents wash their hands after using the bathroom and before cooking, but 25% of households have no soap for hand washing and the majority access piped water as their primary water source.

Approximately 93% of caregivers reported some form of well-being issues for their children. Among the top problems cited were the inability to meet children's basic needs such as clothing, medicine, education, recurrent sickness, and behavioural and psychological concerns. The insufficiency of food was mentioned as the fourth largest problem for children.

The focus group discussions conducted with mothers of children 0-23 months validated several findings of the survey. Mothers recognize the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, but cultural practices and traditions coupled with misconceptions and misinformation limit a widespread and sustained practice. Unsafe practices due to financial and economic constraints force mothers to provide infants with milk that is not suitable for the age of the child.

Complementary feeding practices are even more affected by the current crisis, with limited economic capacity and reliance on food aid and external support. Complementary feeding practices are dictated by what is available in the household, and most of the time is not enough to meet the requirements of a young child. The interviews with key influencers provide valuable information on the current status of the nutrition programme in the Gaza Strip. There is agreement among respondents that nutrition is not a priority, and in the last four years most of the support for nutrition has been withdrawn by international organizations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate an urgent need for a concerted and strategic approach to address nutrition gaps in the Gaza Strip and work to improve the situation. In response to the main recommendations of the assessment and the urgent needs, an operational Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) strategy with a multi-year and multi-agency action plan is being developed. Integration across sectors to guide the collective response and the support of a sustained capacity building programme for field workers to strengthen the coverage and quality of the nutrition services is one of the key characteristics of the strategy. Furthermore, the strategy promotes the support of community-based initiatives to sensitize, educate and increase community participation and leadership in the improvement of the nutritional status of the population.

XIV. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION RELEASES REPORT ON ISRAEL AND OPT

On 30 May 2019, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye, submitted a follow-up report to the Human Rights Council regarding the status of implementation of the recommendations made following country visits by the previous mandate holder. Below is the [section](#) of the report on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory:

41. The former Special Rapporteur, Frank La Rue, carried out an official visit to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories from 6 to 17 December 2011. He presented his report on the visit at the twentieth session of the Human Rights Council, held in June 2012 (A/HRC/20/17/Add.2).

42. The visit was undertaken in the context of continuing political conflict, revealing a varied, but often threatened, environment for freedom of opinion and expression. In Israel, the Special Rapporteur found that restrictive national security legislation tended to undermine access to information. He observed discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel and members of the Bedouin community and attempts to curtail their right to freedom of opinion and expression, alongside pervasive censorship of the media by the military. The Special Rapporteur gathered reports of raids on media outlets and physical harassment of journalists, photographers and human rights defenders by members of the Israeli security forces in the occupied Palestinian territories. Journalists were also arrested, detained and subjected to travel bans by security forces. Reports of deliberate attacks against Palestinian, Israeli and foreign journalists covering demonstrations in the West Bank were also received by the Special Rapporteur.

43. In the occupied Palestinian territories, the Special Rapporteur identified the overall weakness of the legal framework protecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression as a primary point of concern. In both Gaza and the West Bank, restrictions on media outlets imposed by the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authorities, including bans on the distribution of certain newspapers, were prevalent, along with intimidation of journalists by intelligence services and State security forces. The Special Rapporteur found common stories concerning arbitrary arrests followed by short detention periods during which journalists were subjected to interrogation as to the content of their work.

44. The recommendations made to the Government of Israel following the visit concerned reviewing restrictive domestic legislation; media censorship; the policing of peaceful protests; the work of journalists; and minority rights. The recommendations made to the Palestinian Authority concerned legislative reform; independence of the media regulatory body; press freedom; and the right to peaceful assembly. The recommendations made to the de facto authorities in Gaza concerned media freedom; peaceful assembly; and the work of journalists.

45. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the information provided by the Palestinian Authority in support of the present report. He regrets that a response was not submitted by the Government of Israel. The 22 communications sent to Israel and the 4 communications sent to the Palestinian Authority since the visit testify to the continuing concerns regarding freedom of opinion and expression in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The recommendations made by the

former Special Rapporteur have retained their relevance throughout this period, during which they have gone almost entirely unimplemented (see table 4).

46. In Israel, regressive steps towards legalizing discrimination and undermining the right to freedom of expression were taken through amendments to the Basic Laws. On 19 July 2018, the Knesset adopted a bill entitled “Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People” (the Nation-State Law), raising serious concerns as to its impact on the constitutional rights of minorities in Israel. In article 1 (c), the right to exercise national self-determination is declared as unique to the Jewish people. In article 3, Jerusalem in its entirety is designated as the capital of Israel. In article 4, Arabic is downgraded to a language of “special status”, while in article 7, “Jewish settlement” is defined as a “national value” to be encouraged and promoted. Concerns as to the compatibility of the Law with international standards, including with regard to anti-discrimination, were raised in a communication sent by several special procedures mandate holders in November 2018.⁴ A substantive reply to the communication has yet to be received. Further concern has been raised by recent comments by the Prime Minister of Israel, who stated that Israel is “not a state of all its citizens”.⁵ The Law, which has since been subject to several High Court challenges, was adopted amid discussions in the Knesset concerning a further amendment to the Basic Laws that would insert a so-called “override clause”, undercutting the capacity of the courts to decide on the constitutionality of amendments to the Basic Laws.

47. New legislation has brought fresh limitations on freedom of expression in the name of national security. In March 2017, an amendment to the Entry into Israel Law provided for authorities to deny entry into the State to anyone who has publicly called for a boycott against Israel, with grounds for prohibition also including affiliation with any organization that has publicly supported such a boycott. A bill proposing to extend the potential for civil lawsuits based on the Boycott Law of 2011 is currently pending in the Knesset. In 2016, the Transparency Law was enacted, targeting human rights NGOs through the imposition of new reporting obligations, subject to fines, on organizations receiving more than 50 per cent of their funding from foreign Governments.⁶

48. Journalists and photographers have repeatedly been targeted in connection with their work. Frequently detained without charge, they have seen their detention periods extended through a series of administrative processes overseen by the military and civil courts. Threats by security forces, including of sexual and gender-based violence, smear campaigns led by the highest public authorities, physical assaults and travel bans have been used in an apparent attempt to dissuade journalists and human rights defenders from pursuing their work.

49. The recent findings of the Commission of Inquiry, established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-28/1 to investigate alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in the context of the “Great March of Return” protests of 2018, underline the critical need for the Israeli authorities to radically review their approach to the right to freedom of assembly, in particular in a context of occupation and related restrictions on political participation. The Special Rapporteur regrets that peaceful protests have become flash points within which other rights, including the right to life, have been put at risk. He expresses the

⁴ See communication ISR 12/2018, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>

⁵ *The Guardian*, “Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel is ‘not a state of all its citizens’”, 10 March 2019. Available at www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/10/benjamin-netanyahu-says-israel-is-not-a-state-of-all-its-citizens.

⁶ See communication ISR 1/2016, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>

deepest concern at the Commission of Inquiry's documentation of the deliberate targeting of journalists covering the Great March of Return protests, as evidenced by the killing of two journalists and the injuring of 39 others. The Special Rapporteur calls upon the State to ensure that investigations, in full compliance with international human rights standards, be undertaken to identify those responsible for these crimes.

50. When considered as a whole, these developments seem to indicate the consolidation of a policy of selective respect for freedom of expression by the Israeli authorities, according to which entire communities under its control are not seen as equal rights holders. The authorities must take full responsibility to ensure, as an imperative, that Israel fulfils its obligations under the international human rights treaties to which it is a party and respects and protects the rights emanating therefrom for all those under its jurisdiction.

51. In the West Bank, fundamental issues remain. The Press and Publications Law has not been brought into line with international human rights standards and the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation has yet to be reformed. Complaints on grounds of defamation have repeatedly been filed by public officials, including against journalists.

52. On 24 June 2017, the Cybercrime Law was passed, criminalizing, in broad wording, the accessing of websites, the use of encryption and a wide spectrum of forms of expression online, alongside obliging Internet service providers to cooperate with security agencies in data collection without judicial oversight. The passing of the Law was followed quickly by the blocking of websites critical of the authorities.⁷ Despite positive amendments made in April 2018, the Law has continued to be used to stifle criticism online, and there were repeated instances of its arbitrary application in 2019. In its current format, the Law epitomizes a trend since the visit towards the criminalization of dissent by the Palestinian Authority. This has been reflected in the summoning and detaining of journalists for short periods, during which they are subjected to interrogation as to the purpose of their work. This practice has occurred most often in connection with criticism of government officials and peaceful protests, which have been met with violent responses by the authorities.

53. Similar developments have occurred in Gaza, where threats and attacks on journalists, human rights defenders and others in response to acts of expression have been common. As in the West Bank, criticism of the authorities, including online, has placed individuals at the most risk, with journalists working for outlets associated with Fatah also targeted. Recently, public demonstrations against tax increases and poor living standards have been violently dispersed, reinforcing a pattern of clampdown on public protest against policies of the de facto authorities.

54. In both the West Bank and Gaza, a lack of legislative protection for the right to freedom of opinion and expression remains. The absence of such protections remains extremely problematic in an overall environment characterized by hostility towards critical views. Alongside the immediate halting of overtly repressive practices and policies concerning freedom of opinion and expression, a systematic shift is needed to create an enabling environment for the expression of diverse views in the West Bank and in Gaza.

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⁷ See communication PSE 2/2017, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>

XV. OIC SUMMIT REJECTS ANY PEACE PLAN NOT IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW

On 31 May, the 14th Islamic Summit Conference adopted a Final [communiqué](#) excerpted below:

...

4. The Conference re-emphasized the centrality of the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Shareef for the Muslim Ummah, reaffirming its principled and continued all-level support to the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable legitimate national rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of the independent and sovereign State of Palestine along the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Shareef as its capital. It also reaffirmed the need to protect the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in accordance with Resolution 194 and to roundly counter any denial of these rights.

5. The Conference affirmed rejection and strong condemnation of any illegal and irresponsible decision to acknowledge Al-Quds as the alleged capital of Israel, the occupying power, and considered such decision null and void and an affront to the legal, historical and national rights of the Palestinian people and the Islamic Ummah. It called on states that have relocated their embassies to the holy city or opened commercial offices therein to retract this step, considered as a serious violation of international law and legitimacy and a deliberate attempt to undermine the prospects of peace process in the Middle East, and a step that serves extremism and terrorism and threatens international peace and security. The Conference called on Member States to take the appropriate measures against the states doing that, taking into consideration the political and economic measures proposed by the General Secretariat in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Final Communiqué of the Seventh Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Istanbul on 18 May 2018.

6. The Conference affirmed its rejection of any proposal of peaceful settlement, if it is not in line and consistence with the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, as endorsed by international legitimacy, and with internationally-recognized terms of reference of the peace process, particularly the international law and the United Nations resolutions. It reaffirmed its condemnation and rejection of any stances by any international party that supports the prolongation of occupation and its expansionist settlement project to the detriment of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the US Administration's recognition of Al-Quds as the capital of Israel, the occupying power, as well as attempts to undermine the rights of Palestinian refugees.

7. The Conference affirmed the adoption and support for the vision of His Excellency the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, which he announced in his statement at the Security Council on 20 February 2018, by calling international influential parties to engage in sponsoring a multi-lateral political track with a view to launching a credible internationally-sponsored peace process towards achieving peace based on the two-state solution and ending the colonial Israeli occupation, which started in 1967, as provided for by the rules of international law and UN resolution, and based on the terms of reference of the peace process, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the '*land for peace*' principle, which would reinforce calm and revive hope in reaching a peaceful solution enabling the Palestinian people to live in freedom and dignity in their Palestinian

state, with eastern Al-Quds as its capital.

8. The Conference affirmed its rejection and countering of all illegal Israeli measures and decisions aimed at changing the facts on the occupied Palestinian territory, including Al-Quds Al-Shareef, and undermining the two-State solution, whether by the policy of annexation or by expansionist and occupationist colonialism on the Palestinian territories. It called upon the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibility by implementing the Security Council Resolution No. 2334 and providing the Palestinian people with the necessary protection against the occupation's brutality; and stressed the need to continue all efforts to stop these illegal practices.

9. The Conference affirmed the OIC Member States' support for the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Shareef, the central cause of the Ummah, in international forums, including by voting for relevant resolutions in all international organizations; and called on Member States to abide by that; stressing that any principle that any different position would be out of step with the bases and principles on which the OIC was founded. It also called on all states that have not yet recognized the States of Palestine, declared in 1988 in Algeria, to do so, thus consecrating the Palestinian people's right to self-determination as a basic condition for a solution based on international legitimacy resolutions.

10. The Conference stressed the need to mobilize support for the budget of the Palestinian Government to continue its work. It condemned the colonial occupation authorities' piracy against the Palestinian tax funds and some states' cutting of their financial support to exercise political extortion. It called on Member States to activate all relevant Islamic resolutions, including those on supporting and expanding the economic empowerment program for the Palestinian people and supporting the UNRWA to ensure continued and urgent performance of the tasks entrusted to it, by financially contributing to the capital of the Developmental Waqf Fund in support of the Palestinian refugees.

11. The Conference commended the efforts of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, hailing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's outstanding role in supporting and advocating the Palestinian cause, promoting the Palestinian people's efforts and fulfilling their aspirations to establish their independent state with east Al-Quds as its capital. It also praised the constant and generous support to the holy city's institutions and population, lauding the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to contribute US \$320 million in support both of Al-Quds Fund and of Al-Aqsa Fund, for the preservation of Islamic holy sites therein, in addition to the payment of its share to the budget increase for the two Funds, with an amount of 70 million US dollars, as adopted by the Amman Arab Summit of 2017.

12. The Conference commended the continued efforts exerted by His Majesty King Mohamed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, to protect Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Shareef and counter all measures being taken by Israeli occupation authorities to judaize the holy city. It also lauded the concrete role of the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Agency of the Al-Quds Committee through the execution of development projects and activities for the inhabitants of the holy city and support for their steadfastness. It called on Member States to step up their support for the Agency to enable it to continue its work. The Conference also commended the appeal signed by His Majesty King Mohamed VI and Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019 as it bears a call for making Al Quds a city of peace, fraternity and tolerance, considering the city as a symbol of

coexistence of the followers of the three monotheist religions, a shared heritage of humanity and the centre for the values of mutual respect and dialogue.

13. The Conference commended the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the role of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein, Custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Shareef, in defending, protecting and preserving the city of Al-Quds and its Islamic and Christian holy sites, supporting the steadfastness of its Arab Palestinian inhabitants on their land against illegal Israeli violations and measures aimed at changing the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of the city, and renews its rejection of all Israeli attempts to undermine the historical Hashemite custodianship reaffirmed by the important agreement co-signed by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine, in Amman on 31 March 2013. It also commends UNESCO's resolutions on definition of the 'Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Shared' as identical terms, and affirming that Bab al-Magharibeh hill is an integral part of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the right of the Jordanian Al-Quds Endowments and Al-Aqsa Affairs Department, considered as the only body in charge of the supervision of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, to manage, restore, preserve and govern access to the Al-Haram Al-Shareef.

14. The Conference emphasized respect for the legitimacy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, commending his efforts towards the Palestinian national reconciliation. It also called on the Palestinian factions and parties to accelerate conclusion of the national reconciliation in accordance with the Cairo Agreement, signed in May 2011, and its implementation mechanisms and instruments, the most recent of which the 2017 Cairo Agreement, to enable the Palestinian Government to bear its full responsibilities in the Gaza Strip, and to conduct general elections in the shortest possible time, in order to achieve political partnership. The Conference commended the Arab Republic of Egypt' tireless efforts in supporting the Palestinian people and cause and achieving the Palestinian national reconciliation, urging Egypt to continue its endeavours to this end.

15. The Conference commended the efforts of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Indonesia, in their capacity as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, in supporting the Palestinian cause and making several initiatives within the Security Council on protecting Palestinian civilians, including through convening an "Arria-formula" meeting.

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