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

Identical letters dated 22 July 2019 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from the Palestinian leadership, I must urgently draw your attention to the ongoing crisis situation and recent shocking developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its depraved colonization of the Palestinian land and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

Today, in the Sur Bahir/Wadi al-Hummus area of Occupied East Jerusalem, yet more Palestinian families were dispossessed of their homes and forcibly displaced by Israel, the occupying Power. As a result, 17 persons, 11 of them children, have now suffered the same fate as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians before them who have been dispossessed, displaced and traumatized by the ruthlessness of this belligerent, colonial occupying Power.

Ignoring the appeals of the United Nations and of Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organizations, Israeli occupying forces today began to carry out military orders that had been issued for the demolition of at least 10 residential buildings, including around 70 apartments. In the early morning hours of today, a large contingent of Israeli soldiers entered the area and the homes of the families residing there, forcing them to leave in order to clear the way for the destruction of their homes.

The two families displaced and dispossessed today of their properties, including their furniture and life's belongings, include nine Palestine refugees suffering yet another forced displacement. As the demolitions continue, with military bulldozers tearing apart home after home, 350 other Palestinians fear the same fate, in addition to the thousands of other Palestinians, especially in Occupied East Jerusalem, who face pending demolition orders by Israel.

These illegal actions come as part of the demolition rampage pursued by Israel since the start of the year, with the backing of its so-called "Supreme Court" and using pretexts such as a "lack of permits" and proximity of these homes to Israel's annexation wall, which was itself illegally constructed on Palestinian land stolen from the rightful owners. The statistics speak for themselves: in the first four months of 2019 alone, there were more Palestinians displaced than in the entire year 2018, and



Occupied East Jerusalem has been most heavily targeted by the occupying Power. This is obviously being done as part and parcel of Israeli measures to forcibly alter the character, status and demographic composition of Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory through the establishment of illegitimate facts on the ground.

Despite the global calls for a halt to these illegal actions, Israel has actually escalated its illegal settlement activities, particularly the confiscation of Palestinian land, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the construction of settlements, which show no sign of abating. This is being done in deliberate, systematic and blatant violation of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in flagrant violation of the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and with total disrespect for the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Without a doubt, such illegal policies and practices also constitute war crimes, as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Moreover, with regard to the situation in Sur Bahir/Wadi al-Hummus, the Israeli organization Ir Amim has stated that “the structures slated for demolition were constructed legally with building permits issued by the Palestinian Authority, who has full jurisdiction for civil matters (including building and planning) in these areas”. All pretexts being used by the occupying Power in this case are null and void. There exists absolutely no military exigency for this destruction of private Palestinian property; this is a blatant case of ethnic cleansing and forced transfer, tantamount to a war crime, and it must be condemned and prosecuted as such.

Israel is not the sovereign in the area of Sur Bahir/Wadi al-Hummus, just as it is not the sovereign in any part of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, and this includes East Jerusalem. Israel is the occupying Power and does not hold any of the “rights” that it has accorded to itself to perpetrate such colonization in our land. There must be consequences for such brazen, illegal behaviour. Barring action for accountability, it is clear that Israel will only be emboldened to persist with such crimes.

We thus reiterate our long-standing call on the international community, and particularly the Security Council, to act. Action must be urgently taken to condemn these illegal policies and practices and to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council must act immediately and resolutely to uphold its resolutions; it must demand an end to all such provocative and illegal actions and demand that all similar illegal decisions be halted and rescinded forthwith.

We also reiterate our call to all States to act, individually and collectively, to uphold their legal obligations towards this illegal and dangerous situation. This must include efforts in line with the call for distinction, in Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), to hold Israel to account for its violations and continuing disregard for United Nations resolutions and the will of the international community.

The world must not remain silent in the face of such blatant crimes and aggression, and the urgency of action cannot be overstated. The future of the Palestinian people and the prospects for peace depend upon it.

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

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Ambassador

Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations