



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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I. UN CONFIRMS PARTICIPATION IN THE “PEACE TO PROSPERITY” WORKSHOP

On 12 June, the Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General made the following comments on the United Nations participation in the “[Peace to Prosperity](#)” Economic Workshop convened by the United States in Manama, Bahrain on 25-26 June, at the daily press briefing at the United Nations Headquarters:

...

We have been asked a few times about UN participation in the workshop being held in Bahrain on 25-26 June.

As it stands, I understand that UNSCO (United Nations Special Coordinator’s Office) Deputy Special Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick will be representing the United Nations at the event.

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II. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR REPORTS LARGEST EXPANSION OF SETTLEMENTS IN TWO YEARS, IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

On 20 June, United Nations Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council at its 8557th meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, with a focus on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). His statement, as delivered, is reproduced below ([S/PV.8557](#)):

...

Mr. Mladenov: Today I will devote my regular briefing on the situation in the Middle East to presenting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the tenth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which covers the period from 25 March to 10 June 2019.

Let me reiterate that developments during this reporting period cannot be divorced from the broader context of Israel’s continued military occupation of Palestinian territory and settlement activity; Hamas’ continuing hold over Gaza and its militant activity; the persistent threat of war; unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts; and severe challenges to the fiscal viability of the Palestinian Authority. All those developments collectively erode the prospects of a two-State solution.

From the outset, I would like to also highlight that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to face significant financial challenges. It is now operating on the basis of a projected shortfall of \$211 million of its \$1.2 billion budget for the year and is facing serious cash-flow issues. That could impact operations, including UNRWA’s ability to maintain food assistance to over 1 million Palestine refugees in Gaza. I note that UNRWA’s annual pledging conference will take place on 25 June here in New York. I call upon Member States to continue their support.

Paragraph 2 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to

“immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, [and to] fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard”.

No steps were taken to that effect during the reporting period.

During the reporting period Israeli authorities advanced, approved or tendered nearly 6,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. That constitutes the largest settlement advancement in two years and includes plans for approximately 4,450 units in Area C settlements, of which at least 200 have reached the final stage of approval.

Those plans include 700 units in Efrat and 600 units in Ma’ale Adumim — two large settlements in strategic locations that hamper the possibility for a contiguous Palestinian State and north-south, east-west connectivity. Another of the plans would retroactively regularize, under Israeli law, the illegal outpost of Haresha by incorporating it into the existing Talmon settlement. Tenders were also announced for some 950 housing units in Area C settlements, and for 550 units in East Jerusalem. Approximately 20 per cent of all the plans advanced or tendered are in settlements in outlying locations deep inside the West Bank.

In addition, on 3 June, Israel’s National Infrastructure Committee rejected a series of objections against a controversial plan to construct a cable car between West Jerusalem and the Old City and submitted the plan for Government approval. The plan has raised concerns among Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and Israeli non-governmental organizations that it seeks to deepen Israel’s control over the area.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities also continued during the reporting period. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, 92 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized, resulting in the displacement of some 104 people. As the Middle East Quartet highlighted in its 2016 report (S/2016/595, annex), those permits are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. Demolitions in East Jerusalem also peaked in April, reaching 58 — more than any other single month since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) started monitoring in 2009.

The situation in the Wadi Yasul area, in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, is also of concern. Eleven people, including seven children and two women, were displaced on 30 April, after their homes were demolished. Some 50 legal cases concerning other homes and structures in that area are pending in Israeli courts. Punitive demolitions also continued during the reporting period, with the authorities demolishing four homes belonging to families of Palestinian perpetrators of various attacks. As a result, three families comprising 13 people, including six children, were displaced.

In addition, the Israeli army continues to conduct military training exercises in areas designated by the army as firing zones in the Jordan Valley and the West Bank. As a result, approximately 184 Palestinians, 80 per cent of whom are women and children, from the Tell Al-Khashaba, Lifjim and Humsa Al-Baqai’a communities were forced to temporarily evacuate their homes on 11 occasions, including during Ramadan. On 22 May, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition against the recurrent displacements of those communities.

Paragraph 6 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls for

“immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction”.

However, the reporting period saw a very dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza and continued violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I reported to the Council last month (see S/PV.8532) that over the course of 48 hours, on 4 and 5 May, Gaza saw the worst escalation since 2014, with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad launching more than 700 projectiles towards Israel: several houses, two kindergartens, a school and a hospital were directly hit by rockets fired from Gaza. Four Israelis were killed and 200 were injured during those incidents.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) stated that, in retaliation, it had hit more than 300 militant targets. Twenty-one residential buildings were hit by air strikes, one of which was a residential building in northern Gaza. Twenty-seven Palestinians, including two children were killed and 150 injured.

On 30 March, 50,000 Palestinians demonstrated, largely peacefully, marking the anniversary of the Great March of Return, and, although violence at the Gaza perimeter fence declined during the reporting period, nine people, including three children, were killed by Israeli fire during the demonstrations.

Incendiary kites, balloons and other devices also continued to be launched from Gaza, starting fires in southern Israel. At least 70 fires were reported, resulting in the burning of over 30 hectares of land during the reporting period. The period also saw continued violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Four Palestinians, including one child, were killed by the Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes and various security operations. Meanwhile, two Israelis were injured by a Palestinian in a stabbing attack.

On 27 March, a 17-year-old Palestinian medic was shot by the Israeli security forces near the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, dying of his wounds later. On 24 April, following the arrest, tying and blindfolding of a 15-year-old Palestinian boy on allegations of stone-throwing, soldiers shot him twice in the lower body as he attempted to escape while still blindfolded.

On 31 May, in a stabbing attack, a Palestinian severely injured an Israeli civilian and a child in the Old City of Jerusalem. The perpetrator was shot dead by the Israeli security forces. Later the same day, a 16-year-old boy was killed and a 21-year-old man was injured by the Israeli security forces as they attempted to cross the separation barrier between West Bank and Jerusalem near Bethlehem.

The situation at the holy sites also remained tense during the reporting period. For the first time in decades, Israel’s Jerusalem Day commemoration coincided with the final days of Ramadan. Israeli authorities announced that Jews would not be allowed to visit the compound towards the end of Ramadan, in keeping with previous practice, but later declared that limited visits would be permitted based on the circumstances on the ground. Against that backdrop, on 2 June clashes erupted between Israeli police forces and Palestinians inside the compound.

Settler-related violence also continued during the reporting period. According to OCHA, one Palestinian was killed, 32 were injured and 41 incidents of damage to property by settlers were reported. On 17 May, on two separate occasions, Israelis were filmed torching Palestinian lands in Nablus, and the Israeli security forces later confirmed that one of the perpetrators was an off-duty soldier, who has since been suspended pending a police investigation. In the same period, OCHA reported that seven Israelis were injured and 22 incidents of damage to property by Palestinians were reported.

During the reporting period, there were some developments regarding ongoing cases before Israeli authorities pertaining to the perpetrators of various acts of violence. On 14 May, the Israeli minor accused of killing Aisha Al-Rabi, the Palestinian mother of eight, in 2018, was released on bail to house arrest with electronic monitoring. Prosecutors also reached a plea bargain with the Israeli suspected of conspiring to carry out the 2015 arson attack that killed the Dawabsheh family. According to the deal, the suspect, who was a minor at the time of the attack, will plead guilty to conspiracy to commit arson out of racist motives, as well as for other hate crimes. His trial over the remaining charge of membership in a terrorist organization will proceed.

Meanwhile, on 15 May, the Israeli Military Police Criminal Investigation Division closed its investigation into the killing of a double amputee at the Gaza fence demonstrations in December 2017. It concluded that there was no evidence that the man was killed by direct Israeli army fire.

Several Palestinians were prosecuted for involvement in attacks on Israelis, including one indicted for planning under Hamas' instructions a suicide car bombing on Israel's election day, and two other men for planning a shooting attack at Tel Aviv's beach.

Paragraph 7 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls upon the parties "to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric". Unfortunately, such actions continued during the reporting period. On 15 May, a senior Hamas official addressed a rally in Gaza and warned Israelis that the "day of your slaughter, extermination and annihilation is near". He called for them to leave and search for a place "in Europe, or in hell, or in the sea". The official Hamas television channel also repeatedly continued to glorify perpetrators of terror attacks against Israelis, and broadcast songs with graphic lyrics encouraging viewers to blow up Jews. Fatah's official social media pages also continued to glorify perpetrators of terrorist attacks.

Israeli officials continued to make highly provocative statements as well. An outgoing member of the Knesset confronted families of Palestinian prisoners and threatened to "eliminate them [and] bury them with pigs". Another politician called on the Prime Minister to allow hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners to die, while many boasted about the damage Israel was causing in strikes in Gaza in response to rocket attacks.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterates calls by the Middle East Quartet for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. Some positive developments were witnessed during the reporting period, most notably with regard to addressing the critical humanitarian and socioeconomic needs in Gaza, but they were significantly overshadowed by the negative trends.

The international community has continued its efforts to address the dire 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 by the United Nations.

On 7 May, the State of Qatar announced its continued provision of financial assistance to the Palestinian people, including a pledge of \$480 million, of which \$180 million is intended for humanitarian assistance to Gaza, some of it to be implemented by the United Nations; \$250 million as loans for the Palestinian Government; and \$50 million as grants for projects in the West Bank. That commitment has made a very positive impact on the efforts to de-escalate the situation in Gaza. However, what remains is the necessity to find a sustainable and comprehensive solution that addresses the dire economic and humanitarian conditions and establishes the conditions for lasting peace. In that regard, the United Nations currently has funding to extend the fuel programme that will provide electricity to Gaza until the end of the year. In parallel to that effort, we are actively working on more sustainable solutions in the energy sector.

The United Nations is also advancing on the creation of dignified jobs for Gaza's men and women. The ongoing temporary employment programmes, which the United Nations Development Programme and UNRWA started with Swiss and Qatari funds, are already making a critical difference to people's lives. So far, more than 7,500 people have been employed in temporary jobs, with at least 2,500 more likely to follow. The programme, we hope, can be expanded soon.

Nevertheless, as I said, negative trends continue to overshadow positive developments. In Gaza, despite the intensified efforts, the humanitarian, security and political situation remains deeply worrisome, as the Egyptian brokered intra-Palestinian agreement in October 2017 on the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza remains unimplemented. The situation was also worsened by the temporary closures of the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings and a series of reductions in the fishing zone introduced by Israel as tensions continued to fluctuate. Seized fishing vessels have yet to be returned to their owners by the IDF.

The reporting period also saw serious movement and access constraints being placed on national staff from United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Gaza. Some 250 personnel, including 149 United Nations staff and 103 NGO staff, are prohibited from obtaining Israeli-issued permits for travel from Gaza to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for a period of 12 months. Those numbers reflect a significant increase from 2017, when only 40 United Nations staff faced similar prohibitions.

The reporting period also saw no resolution of the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, following Israel's decision to withhold part of the clearance revenues of the Palestinian Authority. That was followed by the Palestinian leadership's refusal to accept any transfers from Israel less than the full amounts owed to it. The fiscal crisis and related austerity measures are severely impacting the Palestinian economy, with the outlook for the private sector remaining very bleak.

Paragraph 5 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Member States

“to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967”.

We are not aware of any such steps taken during the reporting period. Paragraph 8 of the resolution also calls upon

“all parties to continue [inter alia] to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations”.

No credible efforts have been made in that direction either.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations concerning the implementation of the resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period. The expansion of Israeli settlements has no legal effect and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, as stated in resolution 2334 (2016). It must cease immediately and completely. Settlement expansion in occupied East Jerusalem, which further undermines the viability of the two-State solution with Jerusalem as the future capital of both Israel and Palestine, is particularly concerning. During the Israeli election campaign, statements were made by some politicians expressing support for the unilateral annexation of all or parts of the West Bank. Such a prospect would be devastating to the potential of reviving negotiations, regional peace and the very essence of the two-State solution.

The persistent threat of demolitions and the displacement of Palestinians in Area C, East Jerusalem and Hebron’s H2 area are also of concern. Only 13 per cent of East Jerusalem is designated for new Palestinian residential construction, an estimated one-third of housing units in East Jerusalem are built without a permit, and an estimated 13,000 demolition orders issued against Palestinian-owned structures in Area C since 1988 are still outstanding. The demolitions and displacement in Area C and East Jerusalem affect women and girls in particular. Women have to shoulder additional daily responsibilities to ensure their own survival and that of their families in unfamiliar circumstances. A 2018 report by UN-Women on Palestine has shown that the burden of family responsibility, coupled with the anguish and trauma of sudden loss, takes a huge toll on the women’s health and well-being.

Israel has declared some 18 per cent of the West Bank as firing zones for military training, while civilian presence is prohibited by military order during training exercises. There are 38 Palestinian herding communities and a population of over 6,200 people located within these areas who are impacted by a range of measures, including evacuations. There are also 11 Israeli outposts located either partially or completely in the designated firing zones, which have not been subjected to similar evacuations. The practice of evacuating Palestinian communities located in these areas should also cease.

The situation in Gaza continues to be perilous, with the persistent threat of another major escalation and the continued suffering of the population. It is tragic and unacceptable that people continue to be killed and injured unnecessarily during demonstrations by indiscriminate rocket attacks or other hostile acts. The launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian populations is prohibited by international humanitarian law, and Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad must cease this practice immediately. Consistent with international human rights standards, Israeli security forces have the responsibility to exercise restraint and should use lethal force against demonstrators only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

I unequivocally condemn all attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians and call on all to refrain from violence and on leaders to clearly condemn such acts when they occur, as called for by resolution 2334 (2016). All perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes.

The situation of the Palestinian population and human rights defenders in the H2 area of Hebron following the withdrawal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron remains worrying. United Nations staff and the diplomatic community have been harassed and intimidated since the departure of the Temporary International Presence. Humanitarian actors and human rights defenders must be allowed to carry out their activities freely and safely and to ensure that any attacks are thoroughly, impartially and independently investigated and the perpetrators held accountable.

I am deeply concerned about developments relating to the clearance of revenues of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Government is facing a very serious financial crisis that, unless resolved, risks triggering a series of dangerous developments that will be difficult to mitigate and contain, including the potential collapse of the Authority and the undermining of 25 years of international investment in supporting the two-State solution and the Oslo process. I echo the call of Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh on Israel to restore the revenue transfers in full and call on both sides to engage in a constructive manner to ensure compliance with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

I remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza. Funding received to date has enabled the temporary increase in energy supply. However, sustainable solutions for the energy crisis must be advanced without delay. At the same time, while acknowledging its legitimate security concerns, Israel must continue to ease restrictions on the movement of goods and people to and from Gaza, with the goal of ultimately lifting them. It is crucial to ensure that calm is sustained in order to gradually introduce longer-term projects that will support Gaza's development.

I reiterate my call on all Palestinian factions to actively engage with Egypt on reconciliation. Despite the challenges, it is critical that these efforts continue. The United Nations remains steadfast in its support of Egypt's efforts in that regard, and I call on all factions to take concrete steps to ensure the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate national Palestinian Government. Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of the two-State solution.

Finally, I take note of the upcoming workshop convened by the United States and the Kingdom of Bahrain 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 for the population is crucial to creating an environment conducive to viable negotiations. However, I must emphasize that the conflict cannot be resolved through economic measures alone. Such steps can only be complementary to a legitimate political process that ends the occupation and addresses all final-status issues in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

In closing, let me reiterate that I remain deeply concerned by the state of our collective efforts and the weakening of the international consensus on achieving an end to the occupation and the realization of a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the 1967 lines, international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

In the absence of any progress to resolve all final-status issues, creating conditions for the parties to return to meaningful bilateral negotiations remains critical. Yet we must be clear. On its own, no amount of humanitarian or economic support will resolve the conflict. It requires political solutions. In Gaza, our efforts consist in continuing to try and de-escalate the situation and provide a semblance of hope to the population, but Gaza's future will rest on the ability of leaders to summon the political will to devise concrete and sustainable solutions to the crisis. At the same time, the West Bank continues to simmer as it faces a range of challenges that threaten to upend decades of Palestinian and international efforts to support a Palestinian State.

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III. UN HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS ANNEXATION A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

On 20 June, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, in the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued the following [press release](#):

Recent statements by senior Israeli political leaders and US diplomats in support of the annexation of parts or all of the occupied West Bank by Israel fly in the face of the absolute prohibition against the annexation of occupied territories, a UN human rights expert said today.

“International law is very clear: annexation and territorial conquest are forbidden by the Charter of the United Nations,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. “The Security Council, beginning with Resolution 242 in November 1967, has expressly affirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war or force on eight occasions, most recently in 2016.”

This reflects the seminal observation of Lassa Oppenheim, a renowned scholar of international law, who wrote in 1917, amidst the bloodbath of the First World War, that: “There is not an atom of sovereignty in the authority of the occupying power.”

Since the Second World War, the nations of the world have accepted that allowing war and conquest to remain a legitimate policy of modern statecraft is folly, Lynk said. “Without this absolute prohibition, acquisitive states would have a strong incentive to obfuscate the origins of the territorial acquisition, leading us backwards to the days when borders were impediments to overcome, rather than frontiers to respect.”

The Special Rapporteur observed that the absolute prohibition against annexation applies whether the occupied territory was acquired through a war of aggression or a defensive war.

“While annexation has not disappeared from the modern world, this strict prohibition in international law has had a considerable dampening effect,” said Lynk. He noted that the instances of annexation since 1948 have significantly declined, compared to the 120 years before the Second World War. “The power of the prohibition is that annexations in the

modern world, when they do happen, are rarely recognized by other nations. International law, when married to international resolve, works.”

The Special Rapporteur called upon the international community to state now, clearly and comprehensively, that any further de jure annexations of occupied Palestinian territory by Israel will be condemned and will not be recognized. He also requested the international community to access its menu of international remedies and countermeasures, and to demand accountability from Israel with respect to its settlement enterprise and its current and planned annexation measures.

“International criticism, absent any consequences, can no longer be justified in the current circumstances,” said Lynk “If annexation proceeds, the chances for a genuine and just peace in the foreseeable future will have gone from implausible to unimaginable.”

IV. INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY ON PALESTINE’S SIGNING OF SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released the following [press release](#) on 21 June:

Media reports that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has recognized Palestine as a State by signing a safeguards agreement with it are wrong. The conclusion of a safeguards agreement does not imply the expression by the IAEA of any opinion regarding the status of Palestine and doesn’t affect its status in the IAEA. Media reports suggesting otherwise are wrong.

V. UN SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES CONCLUDES MISSION TO THE REGION

On 24 June, the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories released the following [statement](#):

A United Nations committee notes with deep concern the continued degradation of the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israeli policies and practices, and expresses particular alarm at a spike in settlement expansion and settler violence, including the targeting of children and schools.

During its annual mission to Amman, Jordan, the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories received information about the killing and injury of Palestinians, resulting from the use of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas by Israeli security forces, in what appears to be excessive and disproportionate use of force against people posing no direct threat to life.

Since the beginning of the “Great March of Return” in March 2018, Israeli forces have reportedly killed more than 270 Palestinians and injured nearly 30,000 along the Gaza fence. More than 40 of those killed were children. In the West Bank, the Committee heard about rising numbers

of persons injured or killed in and around the cities of Hebron, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Nablus, and near Israeli settlements.

The Committee notes with strong concern the impact of Israeli policies and practices on children.

Several organisations told the Committee about the practice of night raids to arrest children in the West Bank, with serious consequences for children's wellbeing and the enjoyment of their rights. Following such raids, children are often taken to unknown locations, held in military vehicles, and subjected to threats and verbal abuse during interrogations. In some instances, and without the presence of a lawyer, children face pressure to sign a confession in Hebrew, a language they often do not understand.

According to testimonies received, more than 300 children are detained at any given time in the Israeli military system. The majority are held for minor offences, such as related to stone-throwing and social media posts. Such practices contravene Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires States to use child detention as a measure of last resort.

In Gaza, children exhibit unusually high rates of psychological distress, fuelled by deteriorating living conditions and a high prevalence of violence, among other factors. A recent survey revealed that 49 per cent of children felt that there was no hope, and increased cases of substance abuse, child labour and early marriage were also reported.

The Committee expresses concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the H2 area of Hebron, which is under the direct control of Israel. Due to a stark increase in settler violence and the proliferation of physical barriers, freedom of movement is severely restricted and Palestinians face serious hurdles in undertaking daily activities, including attending school and social gatherings, going to work and opening shops and businesses.

This rise in violence and the atmosphere of impunity have been further exacerbated by Israel's decision in January 2019 not to renew the mandate of the protective Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), a civilian observer mission that had been in place since 1994.

The Committee also heard that Israeli authorities were increasingly speaking openly about annexation of territories in the West Bank. The massive expansion of Israeli settlements – with 2018 marking the highest approval rate for new settlement housing units since 2002 – contributes even more to violence and existing human rights violations, including lack of freedom of movement, appropriation of land, water and other key natural resources, as well as pollution and waste dumping. In the past two months alone, Israeli authorities advanced, approved or tendered nearly 6,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, in a move that constitutes the largest settlement advancement in two years.

In addition, settlement expansion and recent legal developments are strongly linked to the acceleration of Palestinian house demolitions, in particular in East Jerusalem. The Committee noted with deep concern the continued threat of eviction of the Bedouin community in Khan al-Ahmar Abu al-Helu in Area C, which would amount to forcible transfer under international humanitarian law.

The Committee expresses its alarm at the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza Strip, with the Israeli blockade entering its 13th year. It heard that the Gazan economy is in a deep recession, with an unemployment rate of over 50 per cent. The severe, arbitrary and punitive restrictions on the fishing zone and the lack of safe drinking water are cited as serious impediments to an adequate standard of living in Gaza.

The health system in Gaza is over-stretched and under-resourced, and the ability of people to receive adequate health care is seriously compromised. Addressing serious illnesses and complex surgeries is particularly challenging due to the lack of essential equipment, expertise and medicine. The Committee heard of the restrictions imposed on Palestinians referred to medical treatment outside of Gaza, in particular on those injured as a result of the demonstrations at the fence.

Reportedly, only 17 percent of the persons injured in the context of demonstrations receive the necessary permit to travel outside of Gaza for medical care, versus 60 percent of other persons living in Gaza requiring health care and applying for a permit. Delays in receiving permits, and occasional refusals to allow parents and immediate family members to accompany children, are additional challenges for Palestinian patients in Gaza requiring urgent medical assistance outside of the Strip.

Finally, the Committee expresses deep concern at the precarious financial situation of UNRWA, which plays a critical and unique role in assisting Palestinian refugees in accessing health, education and other services in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and in neighbouring countries.

In this context of increased Israeli discriminatory practices against Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and in order to cease the deterioration of their human rights situation, members of the Committee stress the importance of the peace process and of the two-State solution.

The delegates of the Special Committee held meetings with civil society organisations, Palestinian government officials and UN representatives during their visit to Amman from 17 to 20 June. They also visited UNRWA Baqa'a Palestine refugee camp, including a school and health centre, in north Amman area.

The committee will present its next report to the General Assembly in November 2019.

VI. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES DONORS TO MAINTAIN THEIR SUPPORT OF UNRWA AT 2018 LEVEL

Following are UN Secretary-General António Guterres' [remarks](#) to the pledging conference for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in New York on 25 June:

I am pleased to join you again for this year's pledging conference for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

When we gathered last year at this meeting, we feared the worst — UNRWA schools not opening, food for refugees running out, clinics closing.

Fortunately, that did not happen because, in 2018, many of you stepped up to assert that Palestine refugees deserved the assistance, dignity and hope that UNRWA provides. You spoke forcefully of how supporting UNRWA meant maintaining regional stability, protecting humanitarian space and preserving global solidarity regarding one of the world's most difficult situations. And together, through your generosity and UNRWA's hard work, we lived up to the United Nations values of supporting those in need and leaving no one behind.

For nearly seven decades, UNRWA has faithfully and effectively fulfilled its mandate to assist Palestine refugees until a just and lasting solution is found.

It is tragic that a political solution has not yet been reached that satisfies the needs and aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. I reiterate the importance of continuing to pursue peace efforts to realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. In the meantime, the continued work of UNRWA should be viewed not only as our common responsibility, but as our common success.

Millions of children have benefitted from an UNRWA education. When I visited UNRWA schools in Gaza and Jordan, I was struck by the positive energy and attitudes of the children, who learn United Nations values of human rights and tolerance, and who want to be positive citizens of this world.

At this meeting today, you will hear yourself from two students, as the President of the General Assembly already mentioned, Hanan and Hatem, who represent UNRWA's student parliament in the West Bank and Gaza, and who practise democracy and conflict resolution every day in their work.

UNRWA's innovative health-care services maintain high standards and are remarkably cost-effective. Its emergency and social services address the fundamental needs of millions. In Gaza alone, 1 million Palestine refugees depend on UNRWA for food.

If we are proud of these accomplishments, we need to support them in concrete ways. UNRWA has maintained its operations through nearly half of 2019 thanks to generous contributions from Member States and others. By the end of this month, however, UNRWA faces its first funding shortfall, which will continue to grow unless you act soon.

Let me stress that UNRWA has taken extraordinary reform and cost-control measures to reduce inefficient spending. Over the past five years, UNRWA has saved \$500 million through these internal measures. At the same time, it has diversified its donor base. This includes significant efforts to ensure individual and institutional charitable funding.

In March, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) decided to launch an endowment fund for UNRWA at the Islamic Development Bank.

I applaud this decision that will contribute for UNRWA to count on solid and predictable financial support. However, many of these new efforts will still take several years to show significant financial results. Therefore, at the present moment, we still depend on Member States to provide the bulk of the funding.

Today, I humbly ask all donors to maintain their support for UNRWA at last year's level. We know what is at risk: education for a half million children; 8 million health-care visits a year; emergency relief for 1.5 million.

From our experience in 2018, we also know that it is possible to find the resources to keep UNRWA operational.

So, today, given what is at stake at the human level, at the political and security level, and at the multilateral level, we must rise to the challenge and empower UNRWA to continue its important and impressive work.

Listen to the Palestine refugee students, Hanan and Hatem. Their dreams and determination should be our inspiration.

Let us pledge today to keep them and their fellow UNRWA students in school through the year and well beyond. They are the future and they deserve our support.

VII. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, OIC, HOLD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON QUESTION OF JERUSALEM

[The Chair's Summary](#) of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem: "Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem", which held in Geneva on 27-28 June, is reproduced below:

The International Conference on "Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem" was convened in Geneva on 27 and 28 June 2019, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), in collaboration with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Ahead of the Conference, on 26 June, the Committee held bilateral meetings with the President of the Human Rights Council and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Coly Seck; the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet; and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Peter Maurer.

The Conference brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international experts, representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society to address the issue of Israel's policies and measures

aimed at changing the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem, which have significant political, legal and socio-economic ramifications, including the threat of derailing prospects for a peaceful solution to the Question of Palestine. Participants sought to discuss viable strategies to stem efforts to alter the demography and character of the City; and ensure that all its Palestinian inhabitants enjoy their inalienable rights.

At the opening, Mr. Philippe Baudin-Auliac, Chief of Political Affairs and Partnership Section in the office of the Director-General, delivered a statement on behalf of Mr. Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, representing Secretary-General António Guterres. He recalled that the Question of Palestine has lost none of its urgency and that any idea falling short of the parameters set out in relevant United Nations resolutions will stand no chance of success. The statement quoted the Secretary-General, who reiterated that there was “no plan B” to the two-State solution. Accordingly, Jerusalem was a key final status issue and without a solution of its status, no Israeli-Palestinian agreement was possible. Both parties were called to implement their bilateral agreements and avoid taking unilateral action that undermined the two-State solution. Measures aimed at changing East Jerusalem’s demographic composition, character and status were a violation of international law and of UN resolutions. Moreover, the statement called for an “immediate halt to the Israeli authorities’ destruction of Palestinian-owned property in East Jerusalem;” and on Israeli authorities to refrain from passing legislation that redraws the municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem.

In his opening statement the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Cheikh Niang (Senegal), said that “the international community’s pledges to the Palestinian people [...] must be respected,” in reference to the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine and negotiated outcomes for all final status issues. He warned against the expansion of settlements throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, slowly “eating away” the land of the State of Palestine; and against formal annexation, in contravention with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). He called on all Member States to comply with Security Council resolution 476 (1980) and to refrain from establishing diplomatic mission in Jerusalem. He warned that the legislation redrawing the municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem risked excluding an estimated 120,000 Palestinians from the City and absorbing some 140,000 Jewish settlers into it. Most importantly, the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected, and their preservation was the international community’s shared responsibility. The Chair welcomed recent statements made in that regards by world leaders including the King of Morocco, the King of Jordan and His Holiness Pope Francis.

The representative of the State of Palestine, Minister of Social Affairs and senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee Ahmad Majdalani stated, in reference to the so-called economic workshop held in Bahrain on 26 June, that Palestinians did not need an economic solution that would perpetuate occupation but their right to self-determination. He claimed that the cause of Palestinians was not “for sale” and that the workshop had been a “resounding failure” due to the absence of a legitimate Palestinian representation. The political track should be the foundation of a solution while the economic track would be its support. The State of Palestine believed, in his view, that security needs should be addressed for both sides. Moreover, the security needs of an occupying party should not be equated with those of the occupied one. Minister Majdalani also spoke about applying international law without double standards. The State of Palestine believed that protection of the peace process and stability of the

region required “speedy measures”, including and foremost the recognition of the State of Palestine, on the premise of saving the two-State solution. The collapse of the latter would bear grave consequences for the entire region.

Assistant Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Samir Bakr, delivered a message from the Secretary General of the organization reaffirming that all measures by any party aimed at forcibly altering the legal, historical, cultural and political status of occupied Jerusalem, including attempts to relocate diplomatic missions were “blatant violations of international law.” The OIC believed that Israeli violations against Christians and Muslim holy places in East Jerusalem were deliberate attempts to undermine the international community’s efforts to engender inter-religious and inter-cultural tolerance, peaceful cohabitation and coexistence among diverse civilizations. The OIC warned that such violations would engulf a solvable political conflict into a global religious one with unpredictable repercussions on peace and security in an already volatile region. He referred to the collective punishment imposed by Israel through the holding of tax revenues and the exacerbation of the financial and economic crisis endured by the Palestinian people. He underlined that addressing the dire economic situation of Palestinians should not overshadow the core political issue, which remains the Israeli occupation and its ramifications.

The representative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Programme Executive for the Middle East Carla Khijoyan spoke of the organization’s commitment to the cause of Jerusalem. She underlined how the global Christian fellowship shared a profound concern for the people living in Jerusalem, particularly the indigenous Jerusalemite Christians whose future in their own City was impaired by the prevailing occupation, creeping annexation and unfulfilled promises of the international community. The World Council of Churches’ position was that Jerusalem could not be the exclusive possession of one faith or people over and against another. Jerusalem had to be the city of three religions and two peoples for it to be the city of peace. These two peoples were the guardians of its sanctity and had the responsibility to organize their lives in the City and welcome all pilgrims from all over the world. No country could define unilaterally the status of Jerusalem and the solution should come about through dialogue and negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities.

During the first panel, themed “The legal status of Jerusalem under international law and in the context of a final peace settlement”, speakers described Israeli practices in East Jerusalem aimed at weakening the Palestinian presence in the City. An Israeli lawyer discussed the dichotomy between the taxes imposed by the municipality of Jerusalem on Palestinian residents and the quality of services they receive in return. Tax collection was presented as part of a most effective “bureaucracy occupation”. The system of residency permits and impediments on freedom of movements were a means to separate East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied territory, she added. Speaking on Israeli infrastructure projects and on expropriations and demolitions of Palestinian-owned lands and structures, a Palestinian lawyer explained the evolving Israeli jurisprudence and how the High Court of Justice increasingly ruled in favour of expropriations. The Israeli Court based its rulings on laws dating back to the pre-1967 era such as the Absentee’s Property Law (1950) and Law on Planning and Construction (1965).

The second panel, on “Challenges to safeguarding the cultural heritage of Jerusalem”, both Israeli and Palestinian experts in the preservation of holy sites in Jerusalem explained how Israel

was consolidating its control over the City and its surroundings and described Israel's determination to alter Jerusalem's character through the destruction of old buildings and the construction of railroads and cable cars projects. Most importantly, since 1997 Israel systematically denied access to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), mandated to inspect the conservation of Jerusalem. In addition, Israel continued to ignore the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Despite the complex and challenging situation, Palestinian residents continued to preserve the cultural history of their City with the restoration of more than 4,000 architectural structures. Also, they continued to represent more than 40 per cent of the Old City's population after 50 years of Israeli occupation. The important housing crisis in the Old City meant that 80 per cent of Palestinian inhabitants, who used to be part of the middle class, are living presently under the poverty line – they refused to relocate as a means of resistance against Israel's attempts to alter the identity of the City. A Jordanian representative spoke about the main restoration phases of Islamic cultural sites as part of the Hashemite custodianship responsibilities.

The third panel on “Jerusalem: Holy to the three monotheistic religions” discussed how lack of freedom of worship and freedom of movement violated the basic rights of most Palestinians. Archaeological excavations affected the Christian and Muslim quarters, changing the character of the City. One speaker presented an understanding of Zionism which required Jews in the holy land to respect the rights of all religions and accommodate the sovereignty of the Palestinian people. Another speaker explained the difficulty of a pro-Israel lobby in the United States that had elevated Israel to a domestic issue, while the question of Palestine was considered part of the foreign affairs agenda. During the discussion a majority of those present agreed that the paradigm of “My place is my place and yours is yours, and we should not be praying at each other's places” as the underlying principle for the different religions to coexist peacefully in Jerusalem.

During the final panel on “Ways forward to preserve the character of the Sacred City”, a Palestinian representative detailed the actions taken by the State of Palestine before international organisations and organs, including the United Nations General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. One speaker explained how Palestinians were trying to maintain and restore the city, while another suggested organising a round table with Palestinian, Israeli and international experts to articulate principles for the protection and preservation of Jerusalem's historic and sacred sites. During the ensuing discussion, it was advocated that the preservation of the legal status of Jerusalem should be through supporting initiatives that called for an end of occupation, ensuring accountability for the breaking of international law and by entrenching the status of Jerusalem in international law but not through religious narratives.

In the closing session the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Cheikh Niang (Senegal) thanked the Palestinian, Israeli and international experts for having outlined, during the two-day event, the challenges in preserving the cultural and religious heritage of Jerusalem and for having put forward suggestions for the preservation, as an important step to secure the two-State solution. The Chair said the Conference was the sixth consecutive on Jerusalem organized by the Committee, in collaboration with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and highlighted its opportune timing. Ambassador Riyad Mansour (Palestine) spoke of the strategic partnership with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the World Council of Churches for this event and encourage more partners to rally to the cause of Jerusalem. Ambassador Mansour recalled the

message sent by the Committee during last year's Conference in Rabat, and according to which, unilateral decisions to move embassies to Jerusalem were considered null and void. This year's Conference served to send a message on the Bahrain economic workshop held the day before, and which sought to push forward "a dead initiative" of economic ideas.

VIII. UN HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WARNS "ANY PEACE PLAN FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE WILL FAIL WITHOUT FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL LAW"

On 28 June, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, in the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued the following [press release](#):

The international community must insist that any proposal for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the just and durable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to be firmly anchored in human rights and international law, a UN expert said.

"Without the framework of international law, any peace plan, including the forthcoming proposal from the United States, will crash upon the shoals of political realism," said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

"Prior plans for Middle East peace over the past five decades have all failed, in large part because they did not seriously insist upon a rights-based approach to peace between Israelis and Palestinians," Lynk said after a two-day workshop in Bahrain focusing on the economic aspects of a possible peace plan.

The Special Rapporteur said that international law – built upon the principles of humanitarian protection, human rights, equality and justice – has been expressed in hundreds of United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Animating these resolutions is the vision that the law, when purposively applied, can offset a lopsided power relationship between two parties and ensure that all are equal before the law," he said. "What matters is not the might of one's army or economy, but the grounding of one's vision in recognised rights and freedoms."

The Special Rapporteur said that six principles were particularly central to the peace process:

Human rights. Palestinians and Israelis are entitled to the full range of individual and collective human rights enshrined in international law, including the rights to equality, movement, expression and association, as well as freedom from discrimination.

Self-determination. This can mean that each is entitled to their own state within the boundaries of Mandate Palestine, or it can mean a voluntary agreement to live together within a common form of government. The present international consensus supports a two-state solution, which requires a viable, contiguous and fully sovereign Palestinian state, based on the June 1967

boundaries, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a meaningful transportation link between the West Bank and Gaza.

Annexation. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in two stages, in 1967 and 1980, condemned by the United Nations as unlawful on numerous occasions. Negotiations on the Jerusalem conundrum must start with the premise that East Jerusalem is Palestinian territory.

Settlements. The 240 Israeli settlements across East Jerusalem and the West Bank are a ‘flagrant violation’ of international law, according to the United Nations Security Council. They are also a primary source of systemic human rights violations. The settlements would have to be removed, both to comply with international law and to enable a viable and sovereign Palestinian state to emerge.

Palestinian Refugees. International law guarantees refugees the right to select among three choices: (i) the right to return home; (ii) the right to integrate in their land of asylum; or (iii) the right to resettle in a third country. Palestinian refugees from the 1947-49 and 1967 wars, and their descendants, who wish to return to their homeland are entitled to do so, a right that the UN General Assembly has endorsed over seven decades.

Security. Both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in security and peace, free from alien rule, terrorism and threats to their well-being, such as blockades, rockets and missiles.

Lynk reiterated that these principles are the litmus test to judge the possibilities of success of the forthcoming American peace plan. “If the peace plan fails to integrate these principles, it will inevitably suffer the same fate as its predecessors and leave the conflict more entrenched and more bereft of hope than ever,” he said.
