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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Security Council
Seventy-fourth year

Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 26 of its resolution [73/19](#). The report, which covers the period from September 2018 to 15 August 2019, contains replies received from the parties concerned to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General pursuant to the request contained in resolution [73/19](#), as well as the observations of the Secretary-General on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on international efforts to move the peace process forward, with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/19](#).
2. On 10 July 2019, pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 26 of resolution [73/19](#), I addressed the following letter to the President of the Security Council:

“I have the honour of referring to resolution [73/19](#), which the General Assembly adopted on 30 November 2018, at its seventy-third session, under the agenda item ‘Question of Palestine’.

“Paragraph 26 of the resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, including with regard to the reporting required pursuant to resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), towards the attainment of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the promotion of peace in the region and to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on these efforts and on developments on this matter.

“In order to fulfil my reporting responsibilities under this resolution, I should be grateful if you would kindly convey to me the views of the Security Council by 20 July 2019.

“Recalling the Secretariat’s obligation to observe the page limit of its reports, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [52/214](#), I would like to encourage the Security Council to limit its submission to 1,500 words.”

3. As at 15 August 2019, no response to that request had been received.
4. In a note verbale dated 21 May 2019, I sought the positions of States Members of the United Nations, in particular the Governments of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the State of Palestine, regarding any steps taken by them to implement the relevant provisions of the resolution. As at 22 August 2019, replies had been received from Iraq, Israel, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine.
5. The note verbale dated 8 July 2019 from the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations reads as follows:

“The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, in reference to note DPPA/DPO/MED/357 on General Assembly resolution [73/19](#) of 30 November 2018, ‘Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine’, has the honour to convey the State of Palestine’s views on the efforts to implement its provisions.

“For decades, the General Assembly has affirmed its stance on the question of Palestine by adoption of an annual resolution entitled ‘Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine’, most recently adopted by the Assembly as resolution [73/19](#). The resolution’s provisions and the principles reaffirmed therein reflect the long-standing international consensus on the fundamental pillars and requirements for achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine in all its dimensions. Regrettably, the failure to uphold these principles and follow through on those provisions – most starkly reflected in the profound disrespect of the resolution and grave violations that continue to be perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power – have prevented implementation of this resolution towards realization of a peaceful, permanent solution.

“At its seventy-third session, the Assembly again overwhelmingly supported this resolution and reiterated the calls for: ending the Israeli

occupation that began in 1967; ensuring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence; and responsible international action to peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with international law, the relevant resolutions and the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, which remains unfulfilled since the Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II) in 1947 and the decision to partition Mandate Palestine.

"States continued to express deep regret that the Palestine question remains unresolved. Many characterized it as a stain on the global conscience and a litmus test for the viability of the rules-based order. Most deemed the failure to justly resolve it as undermining the international system's credibility, particularly that of the Security Council. States broadly condemned Israel's non-compliance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and its ongoing violations, including, in particular, human rights violations against the Palestinian people, settlement colonization policies and practices, measures of collective punishment and de facto annexation attempts in breach of the Charter prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force.

"The majority stressed that the conflict remains a primary source of regional and global instability and called for intensification of efforts to advance a just solution in line with international law, United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, as repeatedly called for by the Assembly and the Security Council, most recently in resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). Calls were made for urgent efforts to salvage and actualize the two-State solution of Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders, and to ensure a just solution for the Palestine refugee question based on resolution 194 (III), with a near-unanimous call for support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to ensure continuity of needed assistance to over 5.4 million refugees pending a just solution.

"While the State of Palestine is grateful for the principled positions and support extended by the great majority in the General Assembly, unfortunately, such reaffirmations are insufficient in a situation where the law continues to be grossly breached and an entire people continue to be deprived of their inalienable rights. After the passage of over 71 years since the 1948 Nakba that continues to be suffered by the Palestinian people and 52 years of Israel's illegal foreign occupation of the remainder of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, since 1967, more than words of principle, condemnation and calls for compliance are needed.

"Implementation and tangible follow-up action are vital. Absent serious, practical efforts to implement resolution [73/19](#) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions, this conflict will continue to worsen and mutate, the Palestinian people will continue suffering the grave consequences of this historic injustice and future generations of Palestinians and Israelis, and the region itself, will continue to be harmed as peace and security cannot be truly realized for as long as the Palestine question remains unresolved, as the passage of decades has shown.

"Despite the situation's steep deterioration and further setbacks since the adoption of resolution [73/19](#), the Palestinian leadership remains committed to the path of peace and international law as the guarantor of justice. At every juncture, it has reaffirmed its commitment to non-violence and pursuit of political, diplomatic, legal and popular means for attainment of Palestinian

rights and a sustainable solution that would ensure peaceful coexistence between the State of Palestine and Israel, and has striven to uphold all relevant United Nations resolutions and cooperated with international and regional efforts to this end, including with all credible peace initiatives across nearly three decades, in line with the long-standing parameters and international consensus on a just solution, as reflected in resolution 73/19.

“It is regrettable that the current United States administration, in alignment with Israel, the occupying Power, has pursued ‘peace efforts’ that disregard those parameters, are completely detached from the global consensus, and undermine the rule of law, the authority of the General Assembly and the Security Council and fundamental principles of human rights and justice. It is for these reasons, and particularly following the United States decision in regard to Jerusalem on 6 December 2017 and transfer of its embassy to the City, in explicit contravention of United Nations resolutions, the rights, presence and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people in the City and the international consensus, that the Palestinian leadership has deemed it unacceptable to engage with these efforts.

“Such actions, preceded and accompanied by incessant and escalating Israeli violations in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, have hardened the political deadlock, further harmed peace prospects and exacerbated despair among Palestinians, diminishing belief that a solution can ever be found. The Palestinian leadership remains insistent that a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine cannot be achieved without a just solution to the question of Jerusalem and without East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

“Despite such negative developments, the Palestinian people and Government continue to seek a political horizon that can lead them to freedom and a just solution and continue to look to the international community to fulfil its responsibilities in this regard. Palestine continues to actively engage and advocate at the multilateral and bilateral levels towards facilitating that political horizon. The call on the international community has been constant and consistent: to act to ensure compliance with international law and United Nations resolutions, including through concrete measures of accountability, to compel Israel to respect its legal obligations, including under the Charter and as an occupying Power in respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Such steps are deemed vital to de-escalate tensions, reverse negative trends on the ground, including the destructive colonization of Palestine, and ultimately bring an end to the occupation, secure Palestinian rights, and achieve peace.

“While the global consensus is that there is no alternative to the two-State solution on the 1967 lines, there is equal consensus that its viability may soon be nullified by the situation on the ground imposed by the occupying Power. Salvaging the two-State solution requires full, immediate cessation and reversal of illegal Israeli settlement activities. Yet, the Israeli Government persists, in rhetoric and actions, with its contempt for international law and the international community, actively destroying that solution and undermining all efforts by regional and international partners to create the conditions and political horizon for its achievement. In the recent period, this has included explicit threats, including by the Prime Minister and other right-wing Israeli officials, to annex parts or all of the West Bank and more aggressive colonization measures. This has been particularly intense in Occupied East Jerusalem, where home demolitions, settlement activities and other pressures on the City’s Palestinian inhabitants have dramatically increased and where extremist officials and settlers continue to provoke and incite, including in regard to the holy sites, and

particularly Haram al-Sharif, undermining the historic status quo and aggravating religious sensitivities and risking a triggering of a dangerous religious conflagration.

“Blatantly ignoring the Assembly and Council, Israel’s settlement activities and land grab have continued unabated, including, inter alia, settlement and Wall construction; transfer to Occupied Palestine of thousands more Israeli settlers; forced displacement of thousands more Palestinians, including Bedouin families, and particularly in the areas of Occupied East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, including in the so-called ‘E-1’ area; confiscation of large land parcels; exploitation of natural resources; and demolition of hundreds more Palestinian homes and properties to facilitate Israel’s colonization and annexation schemes.

“In the absence of accountability and with the full support of the current United States administration, Israel’s impunity has become even more flagrant. Despite international demands to cease its illegal behaviour, it continues to entrench its illegal foreign occupation and to oppress the Palestinian people, forcibly denying and violently violating their rights, including via military campaigns resulting in the wilful and wanton killing and injury of civilians, including children, and the detention and imprisonment of thousands of civilians, amounting to war crimes. It also persists with its illegal blockade of 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, isolating and virtually imprisoning them and imposing on them immeasurable suffering, indignity and insecurity under humanitarian conditions deemed by most to be dire, if not inhuman and unliveable. Moreover, before the eyes of the world, it is feverishly attempting to superimpose ‘Greater Israel’ on all of historic Palestine. Such unlawful, unilateral actions are prejudging the outcome of negotiations, destroying the two-State solution and imposing a one-State reality of apartheid that precludes the possibility of peaceful coexistence and with far-reaching consequences.

“Yet, despite this dismal reality, the Palestinian leadership remains adherent to a peaceful path and ready to engage in credible peace efforts based on the rule of law and United Nations resolutions, as it has done throughout the decades of the Middle East peace process at every stage, including by engaging in good faith in negotiations, as it has done, beginning at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, to the Oslo Process that launched in 1993, to every negotiation process thereafter. For decades, Palestine’s position has mirrored the global consensus on two States. This began with the Palestine National Council’s acceptance of the solution in the 1988 Declaration of Independence, a major compromise agreeing to establish the Palestinian State on only 22 per cent of our historic homeland, for the sake of realizing Palestinian rights and establishing lasting peace and security. This compromise remains the primary testament of our peace commitment and, with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, represents the boldest contribution to solving the conflict and should be recognized as such and not belittled or demeaned, as Israel continues to do.

“The State of Palestine continues to call for a multilateral political process to achieve the two-State solution based on the long-standing terms of reference and parameters, including via an international peace conference. We have appealed to the Security Council and Quartet members – the Russian Federation and the United States, along with the European Union and the United Nations as a whole – to uphold their obligations and exert serious efforts to this end, in cooperation with concerned regional partners and the League of Arab States and with the vital support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and all peace-loving nations. On our part, we have consistently sought reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative through

successive Arab Summits and cooperated with Quartet members, collectively and individually, and urged other States to make their contributions in support of peacemaking efforts, as reflected in the meetings held by President Abbas and other high-level Palestinian officials throughout 2018–2019.

“This commitment to a peaceful settlement is further bolstered by our constant pledges to resolve the conflict in line with the Charter, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as confirmed, *inter alia*, in the 28 September 2011 application by the State of Palestine for admission to United Nations membership; in Palestine’s accession to numerous international treaties and conventions; in our bilateral and multilateral relations with the international community, including numerous diplomatic and cooperation agreements concluded with States that have recognized Palestine; in Palestine’s official communications and interventions at the United Nations; and in relevant provisions of declarations by the League of Arab States, NAM, OIC, and the Group of 77 and China.

“The Palestinian Government and national institutions continue to take measures to mitigate the occupation’s devastating consequences, even in the midst of the severe financial crisis and instability caused by Israel’s illegal seizure of Palestinian tax revenues. In response to deteriorating humanitarian, socioeconomic and security conditions, we continue to exert efforts to alleviate our people’s suffering, bolster resilience, promote reconciliation and restore hope that a better future is within reach. Such hope is vital for pushing against the radicalism and extremism plaguing the region, especially among youth. The programmes of United Nations agencies, with UNRWA at the forefront, along with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and other organizations, have been instrumental in supporting Palestinian efforts to this end, including in line with the Palestinian National Development Plan and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as has been the assistance and solidarity extended to Palestine by concerned States from every corner of the globe. Our work with the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians is also relevant in this regard.

“We have also repeatedly called for action to uphold the international obligation to protect civilians, an obligation not only abdicated by Israel, the occupying Power, but being intentionally and systematically violated by it. The Palestinian people are in need of protection, as per international humanitarian and human rights law and the many relevant resolutions aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of civilians in situations of armed conflict. The Palestinian civilian population being held captive under Israel’s foreign occupation and blockade should not be denied such protection. Moreover, protection measures and de-escalation clearly contribute to peace efforts and do not detract from them.

“The State of Palestine is firm in the conviction that peace cannot be achieved without restoring the primacy of international law to the efforts to resolve the conflict. A solution must be based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions; only on that basis can negotiations on the final status issues – Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, settlements, borders, security, prisoners and water – arrive at a just, peaceful solution. As affirmed in the Secretary-General’s agenda, peaceful resolution of conflicts requires a human

rights, justice and development perspective, and not just a security perspective, and the root causes of the conflict must be fully and properly addressed.

“We have never sought to impose a solution, as Israel and its supporters do; rather, we have transparently sought application of the law to bring an end to the conflict and achieve our rights. In every encounter and in every appeal, this is all we have asked for; nothing beyond what we are entitled to as a people, as per international law, and nothing beyond that legislated in United Nations resolutions and affirmed in the July 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion. Insinuations that we seek anything beyond what is rightfully ours, and even as we have made monumental compromises, are offensive and ignore the history of our principled engagement in every international and regional initiative and cycle of negotiations, despite being the aggrieved party. Should the two-State solution collapse and cease to be a viable means of establishing a just solution, this will have been the result of Israel’s policies and actions, and not those of the State of Palestine.

“What is urgently needed is political will to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions central to the achievement of a peaceful settlement. Despite all good-faith intentions, including as reflected in the adoption of resolution 73/19, the international community continues to fail to fulfil its legal, political and moral obligations in the face of Israel’s total disrespect for the law.

“The Security Council’s continued failure on this issue is a result of both Israeli disrespect of the law and the paralysis caused by a permanent member’s use of the veto. But this cannot be accepted as the norm. The prospect of a peaceful future for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples will remain elusive for as long as the occupying Power is shielded from accountability, even as it breaches the law, including through the perpetration of war crimes, destroys the two-State solution, and thwarts peace efforts. It is time for accountability measures, including by the Security Council and the General Assembly, in line with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until it is justly resolved in all aspects, and concrete action by States to uphold third-party obligations, in line with article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and other relevant provisions of international law and United Nations resolutions.

“It is high time to firmly convey to Israel, the occupying Power, that its defiance will no longer be tolerated and that it must halt all violations or bear the consequences. This is critical for creating an environment conducive to the credible dialogue and negotiations needed to bring about an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967; to finally achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and to establish lasting peace, security and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples on the basis of the two-State solution and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 73/19.”

6. The note verbale dated 8 August 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations reads as follows:

“The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to his note concerning resolution 73/19, adopted by the General Assembly on 30 November 2018 under the agenda item ‘Question of Palestine’.

“The State of Israel has demonstrated its aspiration and commitment to achieving peace via negotiation. Historic peace was indeed achieved between

Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan. Israel continues to seek peace with all the Arab and Muslim world and to promote coexistence and fruitful cooperation with all its neighbours.

“Today, Israel hopes to renew direct bilateral negotiations, without preconditions, with its Palestinian neighbours and to find a mutually agreed upon and lasting solution.

“The Palestinians’ refusal to compromise is reflected in their rejection of the numerous peace offers made to them by Israel, despite the fact that Israel already has peace treaties with two of its neighbours and evolving relations with other Arab States. The Palestinian rejections were not merely political and were often accompanied by terrorism and violence against Israeli civilians. The violence reached new heights in 2018–2019, with an astonishing number of rockets launched from Gaza – in two incidents numbering hundreds a day – aimed at the Israeli civilian population, causing property damage and loss of life. Incendiary and explosive balloons and kites are launched with the sole purpose of causing fires and destruction to Israel’s civilian infrastructure, agriculture, nature and people.

“The Palestinian leadership gave de facto endorsement to these acts when, at the United Nations, it pushed for the rejection of a United Nations resolution condemning the use of rockets against the civilian population.

“This violence is a result not only of the extremism spreading throughout the region but also of the constant incitement to violence and the glorification of terror by the Palestinian leadership. It stands in stark contrast to this very resolution, endorsed and promoted by the Palestinians, that specifically calls upon the parties to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. The incitement starts from the top; Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has publicly endorsed the payment of salaries to convicted terrorists and their families. Reflecting the Palestinian Authority’s official condonation of terror, public spaces are regularly named after mass murderers. Indeed, the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) mentioned that officials from Fatah and the Palestinian Authority continued to glorify perpetrators of attacks against Israelis, including on social media accounts, by regularly referring to them as ‘heroes’ or a ‘source of pride’, and welcoming attacks when they occurred.

“Palestinian children are indoctrinated against Israel from grade 1. Textbooks published by the Palestinian Authority are built around the same three principles that appeared in previous textbooks: delegitimization of Israel’s existence, demonization of Israel and Jews, and indoctrination to war and violence instead of education for peace. Peace and coexistence are not mentioned; violence is advocated and praised.

“The constant atmosphere of hate and the inflammatory rhetoric used by both the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah and the Hamas terrorist regime in Gaza have led to horrible attacks against Israelis. The examples are, unfortunately, numerous, such as the case of 19-year-old Ori Ansbacher, who, on 19 February 2019, was viciously attacked in a forest next to her home, where she used to go to find solitude. Her Palestinian attacker, Arafat Irfaiya, spotted her and stabbed her numerous times. Then, ignoring her cries, he dragged her, bleeding and in pain, 150 metres. He tied her up, stripped her, and then raped her. When he was done, he left her alone to die. After he was arrested, her Palestinian attacker explained his acts: ‘I left my house to kill Jews’.

“Ori was not the only victim of Palestinian incitement. In October 2018, Kim Levengrond-Yehzekel (28 years old), a mother of an 18-month-old baby and aspiring lawyer-to-be, and Ziv Hajbi (35 years old), a father of three, were murdered at their workplace in Barkan Industrial Park. The industrial park prides itself on being a place where Palestinians and Israelis work side by side. The Palestinian murderer was a former employee there, which didn’t stop him from shooting Kim at close range. The family of the murderer, who was killed in a gunfight with the Israeli police during his apprehension, was and still is being rewarded by the Palestinian Authority for his ‘heroic actions’.

“A clear and unequivocal message must be delivered to the Palestinian leadership: stop encouraging terrorism, stop hate speech and stop educating children to hate. Above all, stop offering cash rewards and publicly honouring those who commit acts of terrorism. Such glorification of violence against innocent people and adulation of those who commit these horrific acts is utterly incompatible with the commitment to coexistence and peaceful relations with Israel that must be at the foundation of a future Palestinian State.

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved only through direct bilateral negotiations without preconditions. Attempts to impose solutions or to dictate parameters and timetables will only drive peace farther away. Thus, Israel utterly rejects Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The resolution is unreservedly hostile to Israel and will only make peace harder, not easier, to achieve.

“It is imperative to reiterate Israel’s right to exist as the nation State of the Jewish people, in peace and with secure borders, and our steadfast opposition to any attempt to undermine Israel’s legitimacy. The Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish State – based, inter alia, on the continued denial of any historical connection between the Jewish people and its land – remains one of the main obstacles to peace between Israel and the Palestinians.”

II. Observations

7. International efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine continued during the reporting period. The envoys of the Middle East Quartet consulted one another informally throughout the year. On 27 September 2018 and 30 April 2019, Norway convened biannual meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. At both meetings, members reiterated support for the two-State solution, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, and called for urgent and enhanced efforts to support the Palestinian economy and improve the humanitarian situation.

8. The United States has repeatedly stated that it is continuing its efforts aimed at a comprehensive peace plan. In August 2018, the United States suspended more than \$200 million in economic support funds for the West Bank and Gaza in fiscal year 2017 and a further \$25 million for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network. In October 2018, it closed the Washington office of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), citing the organization’s failure to take steps towards meaningful negotiations with Israel and concerns about Palestinian attempts to prompt an investigation of Israel by the International Criminal Court. The PLO Central Council convened in August 2018 and ratified the continued severance of political relations with the United States until that country revisits its decisions regarding Jerusalem, Palestine refugees and settlements. On 25 and 26 June 2019, the United States organized an economic workshop in Bahrain under its Peace to Prosperity programme. Humanitarian and economic support is important for the Palestinian people and critical for creating an

environment conducive to viable negotiations. Such measures should be complemented by a comprehensive peace agreement that addresses all final status issues.

9. On 28 and 29 October 2018, the PLO Central Council reaffirmed the decisions that it had taken to suspend recognition of the State of Israel until that country recognizes the State of Palestine with regard to the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, to end security coordination in all its forms and to disengage economically from Israel. On 25 July 2019, following the demolition of Palestinian homes in Areas A, B and C of the West Bank, on the East Jerusalem side of the barrier, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, stated that the Palestinian leadership had decided to suspend compliance with agreements signed with Israel and to start putting in place mechanisms to form a committee to implement this, in accordance with the resolutions of the PLO Central Council. Mr. Abbas is reported to have signed 11 instruments of accession to international agreements on 15 November 2018.

10. Four reports to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) were delivered during the reporting period. They expressed my concern regarding the continued lack of implementation of the provisions of the resolution, including those regarding settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; violence against civilians; provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric; negative trends imperilling the two-State solution; Member States' distinctions, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967; and collective efforts to launch credible negotiations. I have stated that efforts must be refocused on ultimately returning to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation and bring a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is only by realizing the vision of two States living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved. I remain committed to working with all concerned parties to achieve this goal.

11. The extremely dire economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza remained a major concern during the reporting period. The security situation also remained fragile. Following the start of the "Great March of Return" protests on 30 March 2018, demonstrations continued along the perimeter fence. During protests throughout the reporting period, 76 Palestinians were killed or died of wounds sustained previously, including 20 children and 1 woman. Some 2,853 persons were injured by live ammunition, including 37 women. At least one Israeli soldier was killed and nine were injured. In successive rounds of hostilities, Hamas and other Palestinian militants fired some 1,500 rockets, Grad missiles and mortars from Gaza towards Israel. In response, the Israel Defense Forces fired some 1,200 missiles and tank shells at targets inside Gaza. The Israel Defense Forces also destroyed three tunnels leading from Gaza into Israel. A total of 44 Palestinians were killed by fire from the Israel Defense Forces, including 7 children and 3 women, and 181 were injured, including 30 women. A total of 4 Israeli civilians were killed and 200 were injured as a result of the exchanges, according to the Israel Defense Forces. In the same period, hundreds of fires were started in Israel by incendiary devices, balloons and kites launched from Gaza.

12. On 11 November 2018, in an exchange of fire following the discovery of an undercover Israel Defense Forces unit in Gaza, seven members of the military wing of Hamas and an Israel Defense Forces officer were killed. Militants in Gaza immediately launched 18 rockets and mortars. In the following 24 hours, some 450 projectiles were indiscriminately fired towards Israeli cities and towns, more than in the entire period since the conflict of 2014. One Palestinian civilian was killed by a

Hamas rocket in the Israeli city of Ashqelon. An Israel Defense Forces soldier was also seriously wounded by a missile strike that hit a military bus. The Israel Defense Forces responded by striking 160 targets identified as militant sites. Seven Palestinians were killed, at least four of whom were reported to have been members of armed groups.

13. In May 2019, the most serious escalation since the hostilities of 2014 took place in Gaza. On 3 May, thousands of Palestinians participated 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 2 Palestinians and injuring 49. A sniper reportedly from Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired across the fence, injuring two Israeli soldiers. In response to the sniper attack, the Israel Defense Forces launched several tank shells, and the Israeli Air Force targeted military sites in Gaza, killing two Palestinian militants and injuring two civilians. From 3 to 5 May, 650 rockets were fired from Gaza. While some 240 projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome system, several houses, two kindergartens, a school and a hospital in Israel were hit directly. A total of 4 Israeli civilians were killed and more than 200 were injured, according to the Israel Defense Forces. The Israel Defense Forces reported that, during the same period, it had hit more than 300 Palestinian militant targets in Gaza, including a senior Hamas official, who had been targeted and killed by an air strike. According to sources in Gaza, 25 Palestinians were killed and more than 150 were injured. As a result of efforts made by the United Nations and Egypt, a cessation of hostilities was established on 6 May 2019.

14. Since the escalation of tensions in Gaza, the United Nations has engaged in unprecedented efforts, together with the Government of Egypt and other international partners, to prevent another outbreak of hostilities. That included efforts to improve living conditions and the delivery of services, as well as to facilitate increased efforts to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs and support the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza and intra-Palestinian reconciliation, a crucial element in any political effort to resolve the wider conflict. The Russian Federation has also continued its efforts to facilitate Palestinian reconciliation, including by hosting a meeting to that end in Moscow from 11 to 13 February 2019.

15. As the situation in Gaza was at its most volatile during the reporting period, there was also a rise in violent incidents in the West Bank, which led to the deaths of both Israelis and Palestinians. A total of 7 Israelis, including 3 civilian men and 1 woman, and 38 Palestinians, including 1 woman, were killed in various incidents, including terrorist attacks, clashes and military operations.

16. The rise in the number of incidents was apparent in October and December 2018. On 12 October 2018, a Palestinian woman was killed south of Nablus by Israeli assailants throwing stones at her car. On 4 December, in the Tulkarm refugee camp, a 22-year-old Palestinian man with a psychosocial disability was shot and killed by the Israeli security forces in circumstances that would seem to indicate that he posed no threat to security personnel or others. On 9 December, in a drive-by shooting near the West Bank settlement of Ofra, seven Israelis were injured, including four children and a pregnant woman, whose baby was delivered prematurely and subsequently died. Hamas praised the attack and identified one of the perpetrators, who was later killed in an Israeli security forces operation north of Ramallah, as one of their own. I strongly condemn this attack and reiterate that there is no justification for terrorism. In the operations to apprehend the perpetrators of the attack, dozens of Israel Defense Forces troops entered Ramallah, where they raided the offices of the Palestinian News and Information Agency and seized surveillance video. Two Palestinians were reportedly injured by live fire during ensuing clashes, and more than 150 were injured in related incidents in the West Bank in subsequent days.

17. On 13 December 2018, in another drive-by shooting, this one near the Givat Assaf settlement, two Israeli soldiers were killed, and another was severely wounded together with an Israeli woman. The alleged perpetrator was arrested by the Israeli security forces on 8 January 2019 in a village north of Ramallah. In a statement issued on the day of the attack, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, announced a series of measures in response to the wave of attacks, including revoking the permits of family members and demolishing the houses of the perpetrators of the attacks, increasing the number of checkpoints and administrative detentions and intensifying efforts to capture assailants still at large. He also announced that some 2,000 houses built on Palestinian private land in settlements would be legalized retroactively and that steps had been taken to advance the construction of 82 new housing units in Ofra and in two industrial zones in the settlements of Avnei Hefetz and Beitar Illit.

18. The situation at the holy sites in East Jerusalem was tense during the reporting period. Tensions erupted at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount on 16 February 2019, when Israeli police installed a metal fence and a lock at the top of the stairs leading to the Bab al-Rahmah (Gate of Mercy) two days after prayers were held there for the first time since 2003, when an Israeli court had banned the Islamic World Heritage Committee from obtaining access to it owing to claims that the site was being used for illicit activities. Between 17 and 21 February, Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers clashed repeatedly when worshippers tried to remove the metal fence to gain access and conduct prayers in the Bab al-Rahmah area. Tensions between Palestinian worshippers and the Israeli police have continued since that time, in particular as a result of the overlap of the celebration in Israel of Jerusalem Day, 2 June, with one of the final days of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, as well as that of the Jewish observance of Tisha B'Av with the start of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha (10 August). Israeli authorities allowed Jewish visitors to obtain access to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount on both occasions under Israeli police protection, amid tensions and clashes between the Israeli police and Muslim worshippers. I urge all parties to work towards a de-escalation of tensions. I urge Israel and Jordan to work together to uphold the status quo at the holy sites, noting the special and historic role of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

19. On 17 February 2019, the Government of Israel began implementing the law entitled "The Freezing of Funds Paid by the Palestinian Authority in Connection with Terrorism from Revenues Transferred by the Government of Israel", passed by the Knesset in July 2018. The law requires the Government of Israel to freeze from the clearance revenues that it collects on behalf of and transfers to the Palestinian Authority an amount equal to the sums paid by the Palestinian Authority directly or indirectly to Palestinians, or to the families of Palestinians, convicted by Israeli courts of involvement in alleged terrorist activities or other security-related offences, as defined in Israeli law, or who were killed while carrying out such activities. On 21 February, the Palestinian Authority informed the Government of Israel of its rejection of the unilateral decision and emphasized the official Palestinian Authority position that, under the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, no amount may be deducted without the consent of both parties. On 28 February, the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, Rami Hamdallah, conveyed to key donors and international partners that the Palestinian Authority would not accept any transfers from Israel of funds that were less than the full amount owed to it. As at March 2019, Israel had begun deducting 12 monthly instalments, totalling \$140 million, equivalent to some 6 per cent of the clearance revenues from its transfers to the Palestinian Authority. I am deeply concerned about developments relating to the clearance revenues of the Palestinian Authority, in particular the political, economic and security implications

for both Palestinians and Israelis, which undermine the Oslo framework and the chance of achieving a two-State solution. At \$2.3 billion, clearance revenues account for more than 65 per cent of the total annual revenue of the Palestinian Authority. Both sides need to engage constructively with the goal of restoring the revenue transfers in full, in line with the Paris Protocol. They must do their utmost to prevent a further deterioration and to recommit themselves, with the support of the international community, to the basic tenets enshrined in long-standing bilateral agreements. I call upon all parties to refrain from unilateral steps that undermine the prospects for a two-State solution.

20. Although the Security Council, in its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), called upon both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, such actions and statements continued during the reporting period. I urge leaders on all sides to stop the incitement and to condemn, consistently and unequivocally, acts of terror and violence in all their forms.

21. Hamas continued to use inciteful and inflammatory rhetoric: its officials praised the stabbing and shooting attacks that killed Israeli civilians as heroic, and they mourned the killers. Fatah, including on its official social media accounts, also glorified the perpetrators of such attacks. In addition, senior Palestinian religious leaders made inflammatory speeches alleging Israeli intentions to destroy the Aqsa Mosque or change the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. On 17 March 2019, both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad praised the attack near the Ari'el settlement, which Hamas called a heroic operation, while Fatah praised the perpetrator as a heroic martyr. On 15 May, a senior Hamas official addressed a rally in Gaza, warning Israelis that the day of their slaughter, extermination and annihilation was near and calling upon them to leave and search for a place for themselves in Europe, hell or the sea. The official Hamas television channel also repeatedly continued to glorify perpetrators of terror attacks against Israelis, and it broadcast songs with graphic lyrics encouraging viewers to blow up Jews.

22. Israeli officials have also made provocative and highly problematic statements encouraging violence and undermining the two-State solution. In the wake of violent incidents in the West Bank in December 2018, politicians called for the deportation of the families of attackers. Separately, there have been calls for targeted assassinations of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials, as well as for a shoot-to-kill policy in Gaza. One politician has gone as far as to call for Mr. Abbas to be assassinated. Others have continued to reject Palestinians' right to statehood and to openly support widespread settlement expansion and the annexation of all or part of the West Bank. An outgoing member of the Knesset confronted families of Palestinian prisoners, threatening to eliminate them and bury them with pigs. Another politician called upon Mr. Netanyahu to allow Palestinian prisoners on a hunger strike to die, while many boasted about the damage that Israel was causing through strikes on Gaza in response to rocket attacks.

23. I remain concerned about the general state of human rights and freedoms in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Throughout the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces continued to conduct search and arrest operations, while the Palestinian Authority continued its arrests of suspected Hamas affiliates in the West Bank. Hamas also arrested and used violence against protestors in the Gaza Strip. At the end of July 2019, 454 Palestinians were being held by Israeli authorities under administrative detention, including 2 women. I reiterate my call to end the practice of administrative detention and to either charge all detainees or immediately release them. As at 31 July, Israel held 210 Palestinian children in Israeli prisons. All children should be treated with due consideration for their age, and they should be detained only in situations justified under international humanitarian law or applicable human rights norms.

24. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in that regard. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities advanced, approved or tendered more than 12,000 housing units in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, a sharp increase since the most recent reporting period. I reiterate that all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has no legal effect and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law, as stated in resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and must cease immediately and completely.

25. The situation in Hebron grew more tense during the reporting period. In October 2018, the Government of Israel approved the allocation of \$6 million for advancing the construction of 31 housing units in Hebron, which would be the first new construction there in 16 years. On 28 January 2019, Mr. Netanyahu announced that Israel would not extend beyond 31 January 2019 the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, which had been established pursuant to the provisions of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 1995 (Oslo II Accords) between Israel and PLO. The situation of the Palestinian population, protective presence actors and human rights defenders in the H2 zone of Hebron following the withdrawal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron is worrying. In addition, United Nations staff and the diplomatic community have frequently been harassed and intimidated by Israeli settlers since the departure of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron. Humanitarian actors and human rights defenders must be allowed to carry out their activities freely and safely and to ensure that any attack is thoroughly, impartially and independently investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. The United Nations continues to engage with relevant Member States and the parties on the ground to ensure the protection, safety and well-being of civilians in Hebron and in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

26. In Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), all States are called upon to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. On 28 November 2018, the parliament of Chile approved a resolution in which the Government was called upon to examine all of its agreements with Israel to ascertain that they apply solely to the territory of the State of Israel and not to the territories occupied since 1967. Ireland advanced in the upper house of parliament the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018, which, if passed into law, would, inter alia, prohibit trade with and economic support for the settlements.

27. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities continued across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israel-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 536 structures, 344 in Area C and 192 in East Jerusalem, between 1 September 2018 and 15 August 2019. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this resulted in the displacement of 597 Palestinians, including 287 children, and affected the livelihoods of some 48,700 persons.

28. In Khan al-Ahmar/Abu al-Helu, a Bedouin community of 181 people, Israeli authorities requisitioned land, levelled access routes and temporarily declared the area a closed military zone, in advance of the expected demolition of its structures. On 5 September 2018, the High Court of Justice denied several petitions by residents to prevent the demolition. On 21 October 2018, the Israeli authorities announced the delay of the demolition to allow for negotiations with the community to relocate it with its consent.

29. On 11 June 2019, the High Court of Israel dismissed a petition by the Palestinian residents of Wadi al-Hummus, near the Sur Bahir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, giving them until 18 July 2019 to demolish nine buildings, citing the violation of a military order banning construction in the area owing to its proximity to the separation barrier. The structures were demolished by the Israeli authorities on 22 July, resulting in the displacement of 24 Palestinians, including 14 children. The forced eviction of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and the risk of high numbers of further evictions to facilitate the expansion of future settlements highlight the growing problem of Palestinians in East Jerusalem facing displacement. The policy of Israel of destroying Palestinian property is not compatible with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Among other issues, the destruction of private property in occupied territory is permissible only when rendered absolutely necessary for military operations, which is not applicable. Furthermore, it results in forced evictions and contributes to the risk of forcible transfer facing many Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Such policies must be reversed, and Israel should abide by its obligations under international law.

30. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 300 violent incidents involving Israeli settlers and resulting in Palestinian casualties or property damage were documented during the reporting period, resulting in 3 Palestinians killed, including 1 woman, and 113 injured, including 6 women. In the same period, 4 Israelis, including 1 woman, were killed, and 34, including 8 women, were injured as a result of stone throwing, the use of live ammunition and stabbing attacks.

31. UNRWA continued to face financial challenges during the reporting period. The Agency's unprecedented funding shortfall, which stood at \$446 million in January 2018, had been fully covered by December 2018, following a number of significant new contributions from an expanded donor base. On 25 June 2019, the Agency held its annual pledging conference, in which I once again participated, after which it announced that its remaining funding shortfall for 2019 stood at \$151 million. I welcome the generous support of donors in assisting UNRWA during this challenging period. I call upon all Member States to continue to support this important humanitarian agency, which is not only a lifeline to millions of Palestine refugees but an important stabilizing entity in a vulnerable region.

32. In Gaza, the international community has taken a number of steps to improve the lives of 2 million people who live under the control of Hamas and suffer from Israeli closures. In this context, the United Nations has enhanced its project implementation capacity by establishing a project management unit to work with all relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of projects, including the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee package of urgent economic and humanitarian interventions. Thanks to the generous funding from Qatar, the United Nations has been able to import urgently needed fuel to operate the Gaza power plant. The daily electricity supply has increased to more than 11 hours, the highest in more than two years. There have also been significant improvements to the humanitarian situation, as well as increased availability of drinkable water and sewage treatment. However, finding sustainable solutions to the electricity crisis in Gaza remains critical. Critical job creation schemes have been initiated and have created more than 10,000 new jobs during the reporting period. Urgent interventions of this nature have been critical to preventing further violent escalations and must be followed by more sustainable efforts in support of the infrastructure and economic situation of Gaza.

33. On 4 December 2018, the United Nations concluded a comprehensive review of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism along with the Palestinian Authority and Israel. It resulted in several important changes that were implemented as of 1 January 2019.

They will allow the Mechanism to better respond to Gaza's changing needs and increase its functionality, transparency and predictability.

34. The humanitarian, economic and political crisis in Gaza continues and, notwithstanding the sustained efforts of Egypt, no progress has been made towards implementing the intra-Palestinian agreement of October 2017. The goal remains that Gaza and the West Bank be reunited under a single, democratic, national Government. Fatah and Hamas must engage in earnest with Egypt in order to ensure the return of legitimate government to Gaza. I reiterate that Palestinian unity is a key step towards reaching the larger objective of a Palestinian State and lasting peace. Gaza is, and must remain, an integral part of a future Palestinian State, as part of a two-State solution.

35. I remain seriously concerned about the lack of political progress to achieve an end to the occupation and the realization of a negotiated two-State resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, previous agreements and international law. I reiterate that the report of the Middle East Quartet of 2016 and Security Council resolutions have outlined what is needed to advance a sustainable and just peace. I urge key regional and international partners to remain steadfast in the pursuit of a two-State solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, for which there is no alternative.

36. I would like to express my deep appreciation to my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his outstanding service in what remains a challenging context. I am also grateful to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Pierre Krähenbühl, for his commitment, and for the remarkable work on behalf of Palestinian refugees carried out by the staff of the Agency. I pay tribute, too, to all United Nations staff who work under difficult circumstances in the service of the Organization.

37. I will continue to ensure that the United Nations works towards ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and establishing an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement, consistent with Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), [1515 \(2003\)](#), [1860 \(2009\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#) and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of land for peace and international law.