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

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

Identical letters dated 20 February 2020 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In follow-up to my recent letter of 14 February 2020 regarding the relentless crimes by Israel, the occupying Power, in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, I must draw your attention to Israel's continuing illegal settlement activities, land grab and annexation schemes.

Such illegal decisions and measures are further undermining the viability of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders and the horizon and prospects for a just and lasting solution. Moreover, as Israel's extremist right-wing government persists not only with such aggressive and oppressive policies, it also persists with its inflammatory rhetoric and incitement, ratcheting up tensions and threatening further destabilization of this already fragile situation.

On 18 February, Israel announced that it plans to construct yet another illegal settlement, comprising 9,000 units and a shopping centre, in Occupied East Jerusalem between the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Kafr Aqab, Qalandiya and Al-Ram. If implemented, this would entail the demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes and the forcible transfer of hundreds more Palestinian civilians and further undermine contiguity of the Palestinian land. This provocative scheme was followed by the announcement today of plans to construct 2,200 additional settlement units in the illegal "Har Homa" settlement in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Jabal Abu Ghneim in Occupied East Jerusalem, as well as another 3,000 units in the illegal settlement of "Giv'at Hamatos", which would completely sever the connection between Occupied East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

If implemented, these provocative and destructive plans would constitute further grave breaches of international law, including international criminal law as articulated in the Rome Statute, flagrant violations of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and blatant disrespect of the international community's will as articulated inter alia in the numerous statements made in the Security Council only last week. The international community must be firm in



demanding a halt to all such illegal activities by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the reversal of all policies and attempts aimed at forcibly, unilaterally and unlawfully prejudging the outcome of negotiations.

It is clear that, before the eyes of the world, the Israeli Government is doing everything in its power to bury the two-State solution and any chance for a just peace. As stated by the Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now, “Netanyahu wants to strike another deadly blow to the prospect of a two-State solution. The planned [9,000-units] settlement neighbourhood drives a wedge in the heart of the Palestinian urban continuity between Ramallah and East Jerusalem, thus preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state with capital in East Jerusalem.”

The Israeli Prime Minister continues to boast about his criminal intentions and defiance of the international community, declaring today: “I established Har Homa when I was first prime minister in 1997, against the wishes of the entire world, and I am happy to see it expand. For years, governments opposed building there and in Giv‘at Hamatos, and now we are building there.”

It must be noted here that these illegal settlement plans were drawn up years ago, and, given international pressure and the sensitivity of Jerusalem, were shelved pending emergence of a more permissive political environment. Undoubtedly, such conditions have been amply offered by the current United States administration and its unjust, reckless “plan” for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has clearly emboldened Israeli leaders to accelerate their expansionist, annexationist agenda.

In this regard, the United States administration regrettably continues to exacerbate tensions, including with the decision to appoint the United States Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, as head of the joint United States-Israel “committee” assigned to “map out” areas of the occupied West Bank slated for illegal annexation.

It is astounding and deeply tragic that – despite the passage of more than a half-century of Israel’s occupation and the passage of more than 70 years of the dispossession, displacement and oppression of the Palestinian people in an ongoing and cruel Nakba – not only has the international community failed to sufficiently mobilize to redress this unlawful situation – from its root causes to the crises we witness today – but is passively witnessing a further deterioration of the situation and the compounding of the conflict. This regression of conditions on the ground and the prospects for achieving a just solution is unquestionably due in part to the lack of accountability for these illegal actions, permitting Israel’s illegal occupation to continue cost-free.

In this regard, it is deeply regrettable that some States have undertaken steps in recent days to shield Israel from criminal accountability at the International Criminal Court, obstructing the Palestinian people’s recourse to the justice they seek and deserve. Attempts to deny the applicability of international law to the Palestine question will only serve to perpetuate the occupying Power’s widespread criminal conduct and imperil the credibility of international law worldwide, to the detriment of humanity as a whole.

The dehumanization of the Palestinian people, and exceptionalism with which they are treated, as though they do not deserve justice or the protections of the law, must end. It must be understood that Palestinians, like their fellow human beings, are a people who cannot endure decades of violent oppression, domination and control by the Israeli occupation without voicing their rejection of this and demanding accountability for the grave injustices they are enduring.

It is not normal that a Palestinian boy should not be able to buy a sandwich without facing a threat to his life. There is nothing normal about the fact that on 15 February, on his way home from school with his sisters, 8-year-old Malek Issa was shot in between the eyes by Israeli occupying soldiers after he stepped out from a restaurant in the East Jerusalem village of Issawiya. His skull and face were fractured, causing a haemorrhage in his brain, and leading him to lose his left eye. There is nothing normal about expecting the Palestinians to accept the barbaric and horrendous circumstances in which they have been forced to live under this illegal occupation.

We call yet again on the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold the responsibilities to redress this monumental injustice. Action must be taken to hold Israel accountable for all of its crimes before it is too late and peace prospects evaporate. It can no longer suffice to condemn or simply be appalled by Israel's illegal actions; practical measures are necessary to bring an end to Israel's occupation and to truly advance the establishment of a just and lasting solution. The Security Council must uphold its Charter duties and implement its own resolutions, without exception, as the first and most vital step for signalling to the occupying Power that its defiance will no longer be tolerated. The viability of the two-State solution is dependent on this as is the prospect for Palestinian-Israeli peace and security.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 680 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 ([A/55/432-S/2000/921](#)) to 14 February 2020 ([A/ES-10/833-S/2020/126](#)) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

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

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations