



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

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

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|       | <i>Contents</i>  | <i>Page</i> |
|-------|--|-------------|
| I.    | OIC adopts resolution on the implications of the US “Peace to Prosperity” Plan                               | 1           |
| II.   | EU High Representative issues statement on the US initiative   | 3           |
| III.  | Palestinian Rights Committee elects Bureau and adopts programme of work for 2020                             | 4           |
| IV    | Secretary-General, President Abbas and UN Special Coordinator address Security Council on US Plan            | 7           |
| V.    | UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issues report on business activities related to settlements in the OPT | 15          |
| VI.   | UN Special Rapporteur welcomes settlements businesses database   | 16          |
| VII.  | Special Coordinator warns Security Council of effects of annexation threat and continuing exchanges of fire  | 17          |
| VIII. | Special Coordinator issues statement on Israeli settlement announcements                                     | 21          |

|     | <i>Contents</i>  | <i>Page</i> |
|-----|--|-------------|
| IX. | Palestinian Rights Committee holds International Conference on the Question of Palestine in Kuala Lumpur | 21          |

*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System  
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:*

*<http://www.un.org/unispal>*

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## **I. OIC ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON IMPLICATIONS OF THE US “PEACE TO PROSPERITY PLAN”**

*On 3 February, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted a resolution at an extraordinary meeting of Foreign Ministers to discuss implications of the “[Peace to Prosperity](#)” plan (US Peace Plan). The [resolution](#) is reproduced below:*

The OIC Executive Committee, at its Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers, convened at the Headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to consider the implications of the announcement of the current US Administration’s plan, or the so-called “Deal of the Century”;

Expressing its regret at the biased approach of the ‘plan’ that fully adopts the Israeli narrative and endorses the annexation of vast areas of the occupied land of the State of Palestine, under the pretext of security for Israel, the illegal occupying power, in flagrant violation of the principles of international law, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the United Nations Charter, and relevant international resolutions.

Proceeding from the principles and objectives of the OIC Charter,

Proceeding from the historical, moral and legal responsibility incumbent upon the Muslim Ummah and in full support of and solidarity with Palestine, its leadership and people,

Based on resolutions on Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif adopted by the successive regular and extraordinary Islamic summits and the Councils of Foreign Ministers, which stress that the Question of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif is the central issue of the Islamic Ummah, and that a comprehensive and just peace can only be achieved by ending the colonial Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine, with the City of Al-Quds being at its core, as an eternal capital for the State of Palestine, in accordance with international legitimacy and relevant UN resolutions,

Guided by the Charter and purposes of the United Nations, its relevant resolutions, at the forefront of which is the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the territory of others by force, and condemning any positions, procedures and initiatives aimed at undermining the rights of the Palestinian people:

1- Reaffirms the centrality of the Palestine cause, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif at its core, to the entire Muslim Ummah, and reasserts the Arab and Islamic character of occupied East Al-Quds, the eternal capital of the State of Palestine;

2- Emphasizes that peace and security in the Middle East region, as a strategic option, will only be achieved with the end of the Israeli occupation, the full withdrawal from the territory of the State of Palestine in particular the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the other Arab territories occupied since June 1967, and enabling the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and sovereignty over its airspace and maritime space, territorial waters and natural resources, in implementation of the principles of international law, relevant international legitimacy resolutions, and the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed by the Extraordinary Islamic Summit in Mecca in 2005;

3- Affirms that the US administration's 'plan', announced by the President of the United States on January 28, 2020 lacks the minimum requirements of justice and destroys the foundations of peace, including the agreed legal and international terms of reference for a peaceful solution and the need to respect and recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to national independence and of Palestine refugees to return. The 'plan' also undermines the principles of international law, including the principle of inadmissibility of the acquisition of the territory of others by force, thus legitimizing colonialism and its implications as well as destabilizing and threatening international peace and security;

4- Rejects this US-Israeli plan, as it does not meet the minimum aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and contradicts the terms of reference of the peace process, and calls upon all member states not deal with this plan or cooperate with the US Administration efforts to enforce it in any way or form;

5- Calls upon the American administration to abide by the internationally agreed-on legal terms of reference for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

6- Reaffirms its rejection of any plan, deal, or initiative submitted by any party whatsoever, which is inconsistent with the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as enshrined in agreed international legitimacy resolutions, or not in conformity with internationally recognized terms of reference of the Middle East peace process, foremost of which is international law, UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

7- Holds Israel, the illegitimate occupying power, responsible for the deterioration of the situation on the ground because of its denial of relevant agreements, its defiance of international legitimacy and the continuation of the policies of colonization, annexation, settlement expansion, discrimination and ethnic cleansing, which have been perpetrated against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem;

8- Warns Israel, the illegal occupation power, against taking any step or taking any measures to consolidate its colonial occupation in the territory of the State of Palestine, including annexation of any part of the occupied State of Palestine, and calls on the international community and international organizations to confront all these measures;

9- Condemns and rejects any positions issued by any party that support the protraction of the occupation and its expansionist colonial settlement design at the expense of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, at the forefront of which is the right to self-determination;

10- Affirms full support for the Palestinian people and its sole and legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by President Mahmoud Abbas, while confronting any conspiracy targeting the Palestinian people's inalienable legitimate rights, and in this regard, calls upon Member States to support all Palestinian legal, political and diplomatic efforts in all international fora;

11- Emphasizes the necessity for member states to work with states and institutions of the international community to assume their moral and legal responsibilities, first and foremost the United Nations and the Security Council, with a view to rejecting and confronting any action or proposal that is inconsistent with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions;

12- Emphasizes the right of the State of Palestine to sovereignty over all Palestinian land occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, its airspace, maritime space, territorial waters, natural resources, and its borders with neighbouring countries, and reaffirms its firm commitment to the two-state solution, based on ending the Israeli colonial occupation of the land of the State of Palestine and the realization of the right to self-determination, as the only internationally-endorsed solution based on international law and United Nations resolutions, and in accordance with the terms of reference of the peace process, and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, adopted by the Extraordinary Islamic Summit in Mecca in 2005;

13- Emphasizes the adherence to peace as a strategic option for resolving the conflict, on the basis of the two-state solution that embodies the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine on the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, internationally recognized terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, with all its elements and natural sequence, as presented in the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002, and reaffirms, in this regard, the importance of the Palestinian political initiative presented by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, before the UN Security Council on February 20, 2018 calling for an international peace conference and setting up of a multilateral international mechanism to re-launch a meaningful political peace process within a clear timeframe and based on the international consensus and the principles of international law;

14- Invites the Secretary-General to communicate to all relevant international parties the OIC's position against and rejection of any plan, deal, or initiative that does not meet the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independent state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, as well as the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they were displaced and uprooted, in implementation of resolution 194, and decides to communicate the present Resolution to the President of the UN General Assembly and President of the UN Security Council as well as the Secretary General of the UN, and Calls for Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly to consider the situation in the occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of Occupied Palestine territory in the wake of the US Administration's so-called Plan.

## **II. EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE US INITIATIVE**

*On 4 February, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell issued the following [statement](#) on the “[Peace to Prosperity](#)” plan (US Peace Plan):*

The European Union is fully committed to the transatlantic partnership and values all efforts to help find a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU recalls its commitment to a negotiated two-State solution, based on 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps, as may be agreed between the parties, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition – as set out in the Council Conclusions of July 2014.

The US initiative, as presented on 28 January, departs from these internationally agreed parameters.

To build a just and lasting peace, the unresolved final status issues must be decided through direct negotiations between both parties. This includes notably the issues related to borders, the status of Jerusalem, security and the refugee question.

The European Union calls on both sides to re-engage and to refrain from any unilateral actions contrary to international law that could exacerbate tensions. We are especially concerned by statements on the prospect of annexation of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank. In line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the EU does not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied since 1967. Steps towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged.

The European Union will continue to support all efforts aimed at reviving a political process in line with international law, which ensures equal rights and which is acceptable to both parties. The EU will engage with both parties, with actors in the region and all international partners. In this context, the European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region.

### **III. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ELECTS BUREAU AND ADOPTS PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2020**

*The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, at its 399<sup>th</sup> meeting on 4 February, presided over by Secretary-General António Guterres, elected its officers and adopted its programme of work ([A/AC.183/2020/1](#)) for 2020. A press release ([GA/PAL/1429](#)) of the meeting is reproduced below:*

Members of the Palestinian Rights Committee described their work today as all the more urgent in light of the new Middle East peace plan unveiled by the United States, which deviates from the long-held international consensus on the question of Palestine.

As the members convened to elect their Bureau and adopt a programme of work for 2020, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, thanked the Committee – known formally as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People – for its firm support, particularly since the beginning of the “onslaught of the [United States President] Trump Administration against the rights of the Palestinian people”.

He went on to outline efforts to combat that political aggression — which began with Washington's 2018 decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem, and now also entails support for Israel's annexation efforts — emphasizing that such policies ignore long-standing international efforts in support of a two-State solution.

Underlining the right of Muslims and Christians to exercise their religious freedoms in Jerusalem, and of Palestinians to a sovereign State, he said there are efforts to unify around a rejection of President Trump's proposal. The League of Arab States recently convened in Cairo and rejected it, he recalled, adding that it is not, in fact, a plan for peace but aims instead to perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among other things, such an approach would give Israel license to annex at least 30 per cent of the occupied West Bank, he pointed out, stressing that efforts are under way to unify and mobilize Palestinians against the proposal. There are plans to

dispatch a high-level Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) delegation to continue that discussion in Gaza, he added.

Meanwhile, President Mahmoud Abbas will soon travel to New York to address the Security Council, he continued. Working alongside the delegation of Tunisia — now a non-permanent Council member — the State of Palestine will seek a draft resolution “with the strongest possible language” but also the broadest possible support, for adoption as soon as early next week, he said. Inviting all Member States to co-sponsor that text, he declared: “We know it will be defeated by a veto, but we want to show that the entire international community supports a common position.” He added: “This is only the beginning.”

Secretary-General António Guterres also delivered remarks, emphasizing: “Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains key to sustainable peace in the Middle East.” Indeed, “its persistence reverberates far beyond Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and contributes to further radicalization across the region,” he noted. Welcoming the General Assembly’s December 2019 adoption of all draft resolutions that the Committee recommended to it, he said the latter’s work is firmly rooted in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The Committee and the wider United Nations stand committed to helping Israelis and Palestinians resolve the conflict on the basis of a two-State solution, he added.

For that reason, he continued, the United Nations has repeatedly raised alerts about actions that could erode the possibility of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State based on a two-State solution and that contravene international law, including the expansion and acceleration of illegal settlements and the ongoing demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned properties. Emphasizing that Jerusalem remains a final-status issue, he also called attention to the situation in the Gaza Strip, saying no amount of humanitarian or economic support will resolve it. Like the broader conflict, Gaza ultimately requires political solutions, he stressed. It is equally crucial that the Egypt-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts continue, he said, calling upon Palestinian leaders to engage constructively on that front.

Committee Chair Cheikh Niang (Senegal), reaffirming that body’s commitment to its mandate, said it aims to improve its work and adapt to the changing environment. Expressing concern that the situation on the ground is deteriorating, he noted that 71 years after the adoption of resolution 181 and a quarter of a century after the signing of the Oslo Accords — which were supposed to lead to the self-determination and independence of the Palestinian people — the reality on the ground, in addition to being volatile, increasingly looks like a single State. Meanwhile, the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) has not prevented the continuation of illegal settlement construction and expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem, he pointed out.

Echoing concerns about the proposed United States Middle East plan, he said it contravenes international agreements and relevant United Nations resolutions. Noting that a total of 139 Member States have officially recognized the State of Palestine so far, he declared: “The time has come to translate the international community’s commitment to the two-State formula into concrete action as the only viable option, ensuring security, peace, independence and sovereignty for both the Israelis and the Palestinians.” In the spirit of multilateralism, the peace process must be relaunched on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, by putting on the table all

pending issues, such as settlements, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, security and the situation in Gaza, he stressed.

In that regard, he went on to invite such actors as the Middle East Quartet, the Security Council and influential countries of the region to continue the pursuit of a two-State peace process, with the goal of endowing the Palestinian people with a sovereign, viable and independent State in which they would live beside the State of Israel in peace and security. He also urged Member States to continue efforts to guarantee the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) access to predictable, sufficient and sustained resources, thereby enabling it to implement its mandate properly for the benefit of millions of refugees.

Several delegates echoed the concerns raised about the recently released United States Middle East peace plan, with some emphasizing that such developments make the Committee's work even more urgent.

In that regard, Indonesia's representative urged the Committee to "keep the issue in the spotlight" and to push forward efforts to publicize the proposed peace plan's potentially negative implications.

Lebanon's representative agreed that the Committee should step up its efforts in light of new threats to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, adding that, as a human rights matter, "this question affects all countries".

Malaysia's representative said his delegation will support any concrete and honest effort to reach a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while stressing that such a solution must emerge from negotiations involving the parties concerned.

Committee Vice-Chair Neville Gertze (Namibia) pointed out that, despite the passing of numerous United Nations resolutions and decisions, "we find ourselves today further away from ending the conflict and to stopping the injustice against one of the parties". It appears that the more unilateral actions by the Israeli Government and its supporters are condemned, the more the rights of the Palestinian people are diminished, he said, pointing out that the Committee was established precisely to avoid such a situation. Namibia is alarmed by recent developments that deepened the divide between the two sides and represent a further setback in the quest for a just and lasting two-State solution.

At the outset of the meeting, the Committee approved its agenda and re-elected its Bureau as follows: Mr. Niang (Senegal), Chair; Adela Raz (Afghanistan), Ana Silvia Rodríguez (Cuba), Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia) and Jaime Castillo Hermida (Nicaragua), Vice-Chairs. Ms. Raz will serve as Acting Rapporteur until another delegation puts forward a candidate for the post.

The Chair briefed members on the Committee's recent and upcoming activities, including those organized in observance of the 2019 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and the Security Council debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Question of Palestine", to be held on 21 February. He added that the Committee will host a Forum on the Question of Palestine in New York on 2 April.



In other business, members took note of a letter from the President of the General Assembly (document [A/74/671](#)) relaying the decision by the Government of Ukraine to cease its membership in the Committee, effective 1 January 2020. In addition, they approved a “streamlined” programme of work for 2020 (document [A/AC.183/2020/L.2](#)), as well as concepts for a conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 28-29 February, and a delegation visit to India on 2-3 March.

Also speaking today were representatives of Afghanistan, Egypt, Tunisia, Bolivia, Iraq, Jordan and Nicaragua.

A representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also delivered a statement.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will reconvene at a date and time to be announced.

#### **IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL, PRESIDENT ABBAS AND UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ADDRESS SECURITY COUNCIL ON US PEACE PLAN**

*The Security Council, at its 8717<sup>th</sup> meeting on 11 February, heard introductory remarks from Secretary-General António Guterres, a statement by the President of the State of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, and received a briefing by UN Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov. Their remarks, as contained in [S/PV.8717](#), are reproduced below.*

**The Secretary-General:** Let me start by welcoming His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine and the members of his delegation.

I address the Council today with a deep sense of concern as we witness growing tensions and instability around the globe, particularly in the Middle East. Tensions and risks in the Gulf have risen to troubling levels. And after seeing some promising developments last year, today we are witnessing dangerous re-escalations of the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and even Libya. This volatile context only underscores the need for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for far too long, and which remains crucial to sustainable peace in the Middle East.

I reiterate my full personal commitment and the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a two-State solution.

As I stated recently, the position of the United Nations in this regard has been defined throughout the years by resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, by which the Secretariat is bound.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis in resolving the conflict on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements and realizing the vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre1967 lines.

This is a time for dialogue, for reconciliation and for reason. I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate the will necessary to advance the goal of a just and lasting peace, which the international community must support.

Rest assured of the full commitment of the United Nations to a just and comprehensive peace between Palestinians and Israelis based on our shared multilateral framework, set by United Nations resolutions and international law.

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and my Personal Representative, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, is here to brief the Council.

**President Abbas** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have come to the Security Council on behalf of 13 million Palestinians to call for a just peace and nothing more. I have come here today to reaffirm the Palestinian position in rejection of the Israeli-United States deal. Our position is supported by the outcomes of meetings held by the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Union, which all concluded that the deal must be rejected in totality, in addition to statements issued by the European Union, Russia, China, Japan and other countries around the world. I cite in particular the statements of the Secretary-General, who has reaffirmed the international terms of reference and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The broad rejection of this deal is the result of its unilateral positions and the fact that it flagrantly violates international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. It annuls the legitimacy of the Palestinians' rights to self-determination, freedom and independence in their own State. It legitimizes illegality, settlements and the confiscation and annexation of Palestinian territories. I reaffirm that this deal or any part thereof cannot be considered an international reference for negotiations.

This deal is a proactive Israeli-United States arrangement with a view to liquidating the Palestinian question. We have rejected it because it removes East Jerusalem from Palestinian sovereignty. That alone is enough for us to reject it. This deal confines our people and homeland in residential fragmented areas and leaves them without any control over the land, air and sea. It would put an end to the Palestinian refugees. It would definitely eliminate all bases for the peace process. It is tantamount to a rejection of all signed agreements based on the establishment of two States along the 1967 borders. This deal will not bring peace or stability to the region, and therefore we will not accept it. We will confront its application on the ground.

I have before me a summary of the project that has been presented to us. The map shows the State that they would give us. It is like Swiss cheese. What Council member would accept such a State? This deal dictates its own terms and the entrenchment of occupation, annexation by military force and the strengthening of the obsolete apartheid regime that has now returned to Palestine. The deal rewards occupation instead of holding Israel accountable for all the crimes perpetrated against our people and our land for decades.

In that regard, I would like to thank countries, regional and international organizations, parliaments and members of the Security Council for helping us defend the international consensus based on international legitimacy and relevant United Nations resolutions. We also thank Israelis — yes, Israelis — who have also rejected this deal in different ways, and those who stood with us in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States. We also thank American organizations and free people who have rejected this deal. We value their commitments and positions in support of peace and upholding international legitimacy.

Some 300 Israeli officers have rejected the deal in this document — 300 Israeli officers who have fought for their country and now confirm that they are fighting for what is just. We also welcome Israeli demonstrators who have taken to the streets of Tel Aviv to reject this deal. I have here a letter signed by 107 members of the United States Congress and another signed by 12 members of the United States Senate, including some presidential candidates. They all reject this deal.

We salute the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic peoples and all those who champion peace around the world and who have taken to the streets by the thousands and hundreds of thousands in the West Bank and in Gaza. Although it is freezing there, they are taking to the streets by the hundreds of thousands to say “no” to this deal. Some are saying that it is a just deal and that only Abu Mazen and two or three of his supporters are rejecting the deal, but it is not like that. Hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets to say “no” to this deal. Tens of thousands around the world are saying “no” to this deal.

Some people insist that this deal is a just one. It is not. I have come to the Security Council today to say that peace between the two Israeli and Palestinian peoples is still possible and achievable. I have come here to build an international partnership to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. We are still committed to that peace as a strategic choice. This deal is not an international partnership. It has come from one State, with the support of another, to be imposed on the world and on international legitimacy, which is represented by hundreds of United Nations resolutions and dozens of Security Council resolutions. We reject this deal.

I wonder why there is determination to draft this United States-Israeli plan alone, given that we have been engaged in dialogue with the United States Administration in 2017, and we have spoken about all the final-status issues. President Trump and I had a long discussion. We have spoken many times about international legitimacy and the vision of the two-State solution, and he agreed with me and said that he would announce that. We also talked about the 1967 borders, Jerusalem, security and other issues, which we discussed in Oslo. I was happy to discuss those issues with him at the time.

However, I was surprised afterwards when the office of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington, D.C., was closed, and they declared Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. How is that possible? He transferred his Embassy, and called on other countries around the world to do the same. Moreover, he stopped sending us aid, which amounted to \$840 million. He also stopped sending assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. I do not know who gave him that abhorrent advice. I know that President Trump is not like that. The President Trump I have met is not like that. I do not know from where he got this behaviour.

I would like to recall before the Security Council that we held the Madrid Peace Conference, the Washington, D.C., negotiations, the Oslo Accord and the Annapolis Peace Conference, on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy that called for negotiations on all final-status issues, including Jerusalem. We should negotiate over Jerusalem. We cannot dictate that Jerusalem is to be given to the State of Israel. No, Jerusalem is occupied land. Who has the right to give it as a gift to one State or another? We are appealing before the Security Council today, which has the highest legitimacy in the world, and we are committed to all Council resolutions.

We also have been committed to implementing all agreements with Israel. We have behaved responsibly, which is why the world has respected us. Some 140 countries have recognized the State of Palestine. We have become a part of the international system. We became an Observer State in the General Assembly, although we were unable to become a full Member because of the veto. We have joined more than 120 international treaties and organizations. Last year the Observer State of Palestine became the Chair of the Group of 77 and China, which includes 135 countries. We do therefore exist.

We have continued to build up our national institutions based on the rule of law and international parameters for a modern and democratic State that supports transparency, accountability and combating corruption. We are among the most important countries that are combating corruption. I call on the Security Council to send a fact-finding mission to Palestine to observe our efforts to combat corruption and to see that this emerging State, under the yoke of the occupation, is free from corruption. Anyone who claims that our State is corrupt has only to come and visit and see for themselves.

We have empowered women and youth. We have worked on spreading the culture of peace among our Palestinian people. We always call for peace. We reject wars, violence and terrorism, and we fight violence and terrorism around the world. We have signed 83 protocols with 83 countries to fight terrorism, and one of them is with the United States of America, as well as with Canada, Russia and Japan, among other countries. We are fighting terrorism. We are not terrorists, and we will remain committed to combating terrorism.

We have held elections three times. We believe in democracy. The last time that we called for elections Israel rejected our request. Why? Because we cannot hold elections in Jerusalem, although we held elections in 1996, 2005 and 2006 in Jerusalem. Now we cannot. A decision has now been taken that Jerusalem is united and is the capital of the State of Israel. However, that will not happen. East Jerusalem is ours, and West Jerusalem is theirs. Nothing can prevent cooperation between both States and both capitals.

Some say that we have wasted opportunities for peace. But that is not true. Abba Eban, the brilliant genius, said one day that Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. We never waste opportunities. Recently, some are repeating those words. Which opportunity have we lost? Do not utter such stupid slogans. We have accepted all United Nations resolutions, from resolution 242 (1967) to resolution 2334 (2016), which amount to 87 resolutions. We became an active member of the international community. In 1993, we signed the Oslo Accord, with all its details and provisions. We recognized Israel and Israel recognized us. We recognized Israel in Oslo. Yasser Arafat said "I recognize the right of Israel to exist". Yitzhak Rabin also said, and put it in writing, that he recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We have recognized one other. What opportunity for peace did we therefore waste?

We responded to the efforts of the United States Administration, international initiatives and all calls for dialogue and negotiations. However, we were never offered the bare minimum of justice in accordance with international legitimacy. The current Government of the Israeli occupation is undermining international efforts. We have seriously seized every opportunity because peace is in the interest of our people and the peoples around the world, and this document shows that.

Several countries, including Russia, Japan, Belgium and the Netherlands, invited us to hold a dialogue with Mr. Netanyahu on their territory. While we responded positively to each of those invitations, Mr. Netanyahu never did. I went to Moscow three times, and he did not make an appearance. Therefore, who is rejecting peace here?

I therefore cannot help but wonder about the opportunities we have wasted, as Abba Eban said and as others repeated. Successive occupying Israeli Governments and settlers have sought to destroy all chances for peace. They have accelerated their settlement activities and built settlements — with impunity — throughout the West Bank and all other territories occupied since 1967. They have changed the characteristics of the occupied city of Jerusalem and continued to attack Islamic and Christian holy sites, confiscate land and wage war and siege on our people in the Gaza Strip, armed, unfortunately, with the strong support of the United States Administration.

The United States has issued a number of decisions that violate international law and have not been accepted by the world and a large number of members of the current United States House of Representatives and many peace organizations, including American Jewish organizations. House of Representatives resolution 326 by rejects the policy of the President and the Secretary of State of the United States on settlements. That was a decision by the House of Representatives — we are not inventing facts or lying to anyone.

I also reiterate that we reject all attempts to link economic assistance to a political solution. They said there will be economic aid — forget about the political solution. They went to Bahrain and Warsaw and said that they will give us \$50 billion, without bothering with a political solution. We reject that. The political solution must come first, and then, if the United States wishes to provide economic assistance, it will be most welcome. However, we cannot accept an economic solution before a political one. We thank all countries that are currently providing us with assistance — without preconditions — so that we can build our Palestinian institutions and an independent State.

At this difficult time, and before it is too late, I address President Donald Trump by saying that the proposed plan by the United States cannot achieve peace and security because it has abolished international legitimacy. Who can abolish international legitimacy? Who can abolish the international legitimacy of the highest platform in the world? President Donald Trump has managed to do so. The United States plan eliminated all the resolutions of the international legitimacy and denied the international legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, while placing East Jerusalem outside Palestinian sovereignty. This plan will not be applicable because it fails to meet the aspirations of the two-State solution, Israel and Palestine, which would be sovereign and independent,

Believe me, if peace can be achieved between us and the Israeli people, it will be the best form of peace that nurtures the most beautiful relations between our two States, Palestine and Israel. But we need to be given an opportunity to achieve that peace. I know that the peace plan is 180 pages long, and that not everyone is willing to read it all. Therefore, we have decided to provide a 20-page summary that is easier to read, as it is unnecessary to read the remaining parts.

I hope that President Trump will be fair and just and support the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy in order to create an opportunity to achieve a genuine peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. An imposed peace will not work and cannot last. Let us achieve peace

by working together, as we began to do in Oslo, without the interference of any other party — I repeat, without the interference of any other party — and even without the knowledge of any other country. I challenge anybody who says that he knew about it. We signed a transition agreement and were ready to uphold it for five years until a final solution was reached. But they killed Yitzhak Rabin. Why did they kill Rabin? May God rest his soul in peace.

From this Chamber, I call upon the Middle East Quartet, represented by the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, including the members of the Security Council, to hold an international conference for peace in order to implement resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolution 2334 (2016). Yet I say all resolutions. Pick and choose any resolution and I am ready to accept and implement it. But no single resolution is implemented? Eighty-seven resolutions are not implemented. Where to go? If resolutions of the Security Council, the highest platform in the world, are not implemented, where to go? To whom shall I complain?

We call for the implementation of all Security Council resolutions, the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative, which we stress as is part of international legitimacy, resolution 1515 (2003). We are not proposing anything new. An international mechanism must be established based on the international Quartet to sponsor negotiations between the two sides. Any other country could join the Quartet, but frankly, we cannot accept the United States as the sole mediator. We welcome it within the Quartet, but we will not accept it alone. We tried that once, and we cannot do it again.

I call on the entire international community to put pressure on the occupying Israeli Government to cease its occupation practices and its continuous decisions to annex our territories, or even territories under dispute over which Israel has no right to annex. It will destroy any chance for peace. At this historic time, I would like to again extend my hand towards achieving peace before we miss this last opportunity. I hope to find a genuine partner in Israel, like Mr. Rabin or any other person who believes in peace, in order to achieve genuine peace for current and future generations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and other peoples of the world. Let us live together.

Our Palestinian people can no longer tolerate the occupation of our country. The situation could implode at any moment. To prevent that, we need renewed hope. I ask the Council to not take that hope away from us — hope for our people and all other peoples of the region for freedom, independence and peace. There is hope that the free world will champion our rights, so do not take away our people's hope.

I would like to show a map to Council members. This map shows Palestine as it stood in 1917, 1937, 1947, 1948 and 2020. Each time I look at the map, my heart is torn apart. Is that what we deserve? Is that what the Palestinian people deserve? Why? At some point things were different for us. How did we arrive at these islands? On this occasion, I would like to address the Israeli people and tell them that the ongoing occupation, settlements and military control of another people will not help them achieve security and peace. We have only one choice. We must be partners and neighbours, each in our own independent and sovereign country. Let us remain committed to that just choice before it is too late.

I again stress that our conflict is not with the Jewish people. We are not against Jews; we are Muslims not against Jews. A Muslim who says that he is against a Jew commits blasphemy. If a Muslim says that he is against the Jews or the Torah is an infidel, not a Muslim. We are not against Jews. We are against anyone who attacks us, regardless of who he is and the religion he believes in. Our conflict is not with the Jews but with whoever occupies our land.

Therefore, we will continue our struggle, in which we have sacrificed thousands of martyrs, prisoners and wounded to end occupation and establish our Palestinian State, while stressing that our people will not surrender. Council members have seen that we will not surrender. We will continue to demand our rights. If we are allowed to enjoy our rights, we will be grateful to whoever grants them to us. However, we will never relinquish our rights or surrender to the occupation, regardless of the time we invest and the sacrifice we have to make.

In conclusion, I reiterate that I am ready to start negotiations. I have always been ready, so long as Israel shows itself to be a partner ready for peace and negotiations, under the auspices of the international Quartet and on the basis of internationally agreed parameters. I am serious. I stand ready to begin immediate negotiations here at the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy. I am ready to start those negotiations immediately. I will say one thing — we will not resort to violence and terrorism, regardless of how strong the aggression against us. We believe in peace. We believe in combating violence. We will therefore not resort to violence.

There are already 83 countries — soon to be 133. We are ready to cooperate with any country to combat terrorism. We are against terrorism and violence in all their forms and manifestations. We will not resort to terrorism. We will fight using peaceful, popular resistance. One need only look at what is happening now in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets, braving the freezing cold to say “no” to the deal. It is not just I or my delegation rejecting the deal. All our people are saying “no, no, no” to the deal. Finally, I ask the world to be careful to not kill the hope of our Palestinian people. I have come for the sake of hope. Do not dash my hope.

...

**Mr. Mladenov:** On 28 January, the United States presented its vision for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, which it proposed as the basis for negotiations between the parties.

The Palestinian Government has rejected the proposal. The League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also released statements rejecting the proposal, saying that it did not meet the minimum rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The European Union High Representative said that the proposal departs from “internationally agreed parameters”. A number of African Union member States also rejected the proposal during their recent summit.

Meanwhile, senior figures in Israel’s Government have welcomed the proposal, saying that they would be willing to use it as the basis for direct negotiations. Some Member States have expressed their hope that the release of the vision would be an opportunity to bring the parties back to the negotiating table, in the interest of advancing a two-State solution.

The United Nations policy on the issue is defined by the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

In the days since the proposal was unveiled, we have, unfortunately, witnessed some sporadic violent incidents throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in and around Gaza. Further escalation or provocations would be a concerning development. They could complicate the situation on the ground and would serve only those who seek to radicalize people and undermine efforts to achieve peace. Today all must show restraint and clearly and unequivocally condemn violence whenever it occurs.

Following the release of the United States proposal, senior Israeli officials vowed to unilaterally annex large portions of the West Bank, including all Israeli settlements and the Jordan Valley. The United States has announced that it will establish a joint committee with Israel to produce a more detailed version of the conceptual maps included in the proposal, which would in turn allow it to recognize an Israeli decision to apply its laws in specified areas in the West Bank.

The Secretary-General has consistently spoken out against unilateral steps and plans for annexation. Such steps, including the possible annexation of territory in the West Bank or similar moves, would have a devastating impact on the prospects for a two-State solution. They would close the door to negotiations, have negative repercussions across the region and severely undermine opportunities for normalization and regional peace.

Just as unilateral steps will not resolve the conflict, those who reject the proposal should not turn to violence. That would be the worst possible response at this sensitive moment. Instead, what is needed today is political leadership and serious reflection on what needs to be done to bring the parties back to the negotiating table.

I hope that the Council will join the Secretary-General's call for a negotiated solution to the conflict and constructive engagement between the parties. The United Nations has long supported a two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

Today, however, it is not enough to just reaffirm our positions. Today is the time to hear proposals on how to move the process forward and find our way back to a mutually agreed mediation framework that ensures that meaningful negotiations can restart.

While it is hard to envision a comprehensive agreement between the parties under the current circumstances, let me strongly underline that we must avoid continued entrenchment in the status quo. Continuing on the current trajectory, described in the 2016 Middle East Quartet report (see S/2016/595), would only push Palestinians and Israelis further apart, deepen the occupation and imperil the future viability of the two-State solution.

The United Nations remains deeply committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians and with our international and regional partners to realize the objective of a lasting and just peace.

As the Secretary-General has said, that goal can be achieved only through realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

There is no other road to achieve this goal, except through negotiations. There is no other framework except the one that Israelis and Palestinians together agree on, a framework based on



the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. In the absence of a credible path back to negotiations, we all face a heightened risk of violence — violence that will drag both peoples and the region into a spiral of escalation with no end in sight.

## **V. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES REPORT ON BUSINESS ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SETTLEMENTS IN THE OPT**

*In the [press release](#) of 12 February, reproduced below, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights announced release of the report entitled: “Database of all business enterprises involved in the activities detailed in paragraph 96 of the report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” ([A/HRC/43/71](#)).:*

The UN Human Rights Office on Wednesday issued a report on business enterprises involved in certain activities relating to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in response to a specific request by the UN Human Rights Council, contained in a March 2016 resolution, that mandated the Office to produce a database of business enterprises involved in such activities.\*

In an interim report ([A/HRC/37/39](#)) presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2018 by the then High Commissioner, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN Human Rights Office noted it had reviewed information that was publicly available, or had been received from a variety of sources, about an initial 307 companies. After further research, the total number reviewed increased to 321. Of these, a total of 206 companies were considered for further assessment.

The report released on Wednesday sets out conclusions following further communications with business entities, as well as a thorough review and assessment of all information available. It identifies 112 business entities which the UN Human Rights Office, on the basis of the information it has gathered, has reasonable grounds to conclude have been involved in one or more of the specific activities referenced in Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

Of the 112 business entities identified in the report, 94 are domiciled in Israel and 18 in six other States. During the complex process of drawing up the database, the Office consulted the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, and held widespread discussions with numerous States, civil society organizations, think tanks, academics and others, as well as having extensive interactions with the companies themselves.

The report makes clear that the reference to these business entities is not, and does not purport to be, a judicial or quasi-judicial process. While the settlements as such are regarded as illegal under international law\*\*, this report does not provide a legal characterization of the activities in

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\* Human Rights Council [resolution 31/36](#), adopted on 24 March 2016, requested the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to produce a report to follow up on the 2013 report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/22/63). The resolution defined the parameters of the current report by reference to ten specific activities listed in Paragraph 96 of the [Fact-Finding Mission’s report](#). Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 was adopted with 32 States in favour, none against and 15 abstentions.

\*\* Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 recalls reports of the UN Secretary-General, resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council, an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the opinions of several human rights bodies reaffirming the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem.

question, or of business enterprises' involvement in them. Any further steps with respect to the continuation of this mandate will be a matter for the Member States of the Human Rights Council, which will consider the report during the Council's next session, beginning on 24 February.

"I am conscious this issue has been, and will continue to be, highly contentious," said Michelle Bachelet, the current High Commissioner for Human Rights. "However, after an extensive and meticulous review process, we are satisfied this fact-based report reflects the serious consideration that has been given to this unprecedented and highly complex mandate, and that it responds appropriately to the Human Rights Council's request contained in resolution 31/36," Bachelet said.

## **VI. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WELCOMES SETTLEMENTS DATABASE**

*On 14 February, the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, issued a statement reflected in the [press release](#) below:*

An independent expert appointed by the Human Rights Council applauded the release of a database on business enterprises involved in certain activities relating to Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank "as an important initial step towards accountability and the end to impunity".

Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, said: "While the release of the database will not, by itself, bring an end to the illegal settlements and their serious impact upon human rights, it does signal that sustained defiance by an occupying power will not go unanswered."

The expert said that the 240 Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory have been repeatedly determined to be a 'flagrant violation under international law' by the international community.

"The Israeli settlements are a significant source of human rights violations against the protected Palestinian population in the occupied territory," said Lynk. "Because of the settlements, thousands of hectares of Palestinian land have been expropriated, thousands of Palestinian homes and properties have been destroyed, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been displaced, natural resources are confiscated, freedom of movement is curtailed, and the land base for a genuine Palestinian state and a viable economy is undermined.

"These Israeli settlements are supported by the economic activity of scores of Israeli and foreign companies," Lynk said. "Without these investments, wineries, factories, corporate supply and purchase agreements, banking operations and support services, many of the settlements would not be financially and operationally sustainable. And without the settlements, the five-decade-long Israeli occupation would lose its colonial raison d'être."

Hundreds of millions of dollars (US) of goods produced by Israeli settlements are exported to international markets each year. "The international community has rightly condemned the illegal status and harmful impact of the Israeli settlements," the Special Rapporteur said. "But by

engaging in trade and commerce with the settlements, the international community sustains their viability and undercuts its own pronouncements.”

Lynk noted that the database was developed and released within the broader context of the United Nations' efforts to promote strong business practices with respect to human rights. In 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to address human rights abuses committed during business operations. Among other features, the Guiding Principles recognize that businesses have the responsibility to respect human rights wherever they operate, and states have the duty to protect against human rights abuses by all actors in society, including businesses.

The Special Rapporteur called for the database to become a living tool, with sufficient resources to be updated annually. To this end, he urged the Human Rights Council to renew the resolution supporting further work on the database. As well, he welcomed the recommendation in the High Commissioner's report that an expert committee should be established to report to the Human Rights Council with recommendations on its updating. In welcoming this recommendation, the Special Rapporteur urged the Human Rights Council to explore whether the database has captured all meaningful business enterprise activity in the occupied Palestinian territory which sustains the Israeli settlement project.

Finally, the Special Rapporteur called upon the member states of the United Nations to enact domestic legislation that would ban the importation of goods produced in illegal settlements domiciled in any occupied territory. “Given the designation of civilian settlements in occupied territory as a war crime under the 1998 Rome Statute, it is imperative that states accept their international legal responsibilities and end all trade with these sources of human rights violations.”

## **VII. SPECIAL COORDINATOR WARNS SECURITY COUNCIL OF EFFECTS OF ANNEXATION THREAT, AND CONTINUING EXCHANGES OF FIRE**

*The Security Council, at its 8730<sup>th</sup> meeting on 24 February, was briefed by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov. Excerpts from the Special Coordinator's briefing ([S/PV.8730](#)) are reproduced below.*

Two weeks ago I briefed the Security Council following the release of the United States “Peace to Prosperity” vision for Israelis and Palestinians (see [S/PV.8717](#)). Today I will provide a regular briefing on the situation on the ground. Let me begin, however, by addressing the developing situation in and around Gaza.

On 23 February, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) said it had fired at two Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) militants who were attempting to place an explosive device along the Gaza perimeter fence. The PIJ later stated that a member of its military wing had been killed in the incident, and Israeli officials confirmed that IDF had retrieved the body of one of the militants.

Since then more than 60 rockets have been fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants towards Israel. As of now the IDF is responding by conducting multiple airstrikes in the Strip. Five injuries have been reported inside Gaza. Yesterday, the IDF also struck what it said were PIJ targets in Syria, where two fatalities were also confirmed. The situation is escalating as we speak, with

continuing projectiles being fired from Gaza and retaliatory Israeli airstrikes. The United Nations team on the ground is in touch with our Egyptian counterparts in an attempt to restore calm.

I take this opportunity to call for an immediate stop to the firing of rockets and mortars, which only risk dragging Gaza into another round of hostilities with no end in sight. The indiscriminate launching of rockets against civilian population centres violates international law and must end.

Overall, during the reporting period more than 110 projectiles were fired from Gaza towards Israeli communities, injuring four people, including a woman and a child. More than 100 incendiary balloons were released towards Israel, many carrying explosive devices. In response, the IDF fired 102 missiles against Hamas and PIJ targets in Gaza, injuring seven Palestinians, including two children. In the same period, three Palestinians crossed from Gaza into Israel and threw an explosive device at security forces, who shot and killed them. On 31 January, a 14-year old Palestinian boy died from tear-gas-canister wounds he sustained during demonstrations held at the Gaza fence last year.

On 1 February, Israel restricted the entry of cement into Gaza, suspended some 500 crossing permits and reduced the permissible fishing area along Gaza's southern coast from 15 to 10 nautical miles. Those decisions came only one day after the easing of restrictions on certain goods into Gaza had been agreed. By 18 February some of the restrictions had been removed and agreement reached to reverse the suspensions and also to increase business permits to 7,000, the highest since 2007, and restore the fishing zone to 15 nautical miles.

Over the past two years I have briefed the Council on the continuing security, humanitarian and political crisis in Gaza and the United Nations response on the ground. We have worked hard to provide electricity, ease restrictions and allow development in the Strip while reducing the risk of a military escalation. Women increasingly bear the brunt of the dire humanitarian conditions in the Strip. They are required to support their families while men are unemployed; many live with extended family and struggle to earn an income.

Among our many humanitarian concerns, today I must highlight the ongoing health disaster in the Gaza Strip. According to local interlocutors, as of the end of January stock levels for 46 per cent of essential medicines had been completely depleted. Let me repeat that — 46 per cent of essential medicines had been completely depleted. On 18 February the IDF enabled a shipment of medicines worth some NIS 4 million, or \$1.2 million, to enter Gaza. That shipment will somewhat alleviate the dire situation; however, I take this opportunity to encourage the Palestinian Government to work with the United Nations and to increase its efforts to help resolve Gaza's ongoing health crisis.

Turning to the West Bank, violence has also continued. During the reporting period, seven Palestinians, including one child, were killed by Israeli security forces, and another 206 were injured in various incidents. Sixteen Israeli security personnel and seven civilians were injured by Palestinians. On 5 February, a Palestinian teenager was killed by Israeli security forces after he reportedly threw a Molotov cocktail during clashes in Hebron. The following day, a Palestinian man was shot during clashes in Jenin, while in a separate incident a Palestinian Authority policeman died after reportedly being hit by a live bullet while he was inside a police station. The Israeli security forces have opened an investigation into the second incident.

On 6 February in Jerusalem, 12 Israeli off-duty soldiers were injured, including one critically, in a car ramming attack by a Palestinian, who was later arrested. Another Palestinian succumbed to his wounds after having been shot on 7 February during protests in the village of Qaffin in the northern West Bank.

On 19 February, a 14-year-old Palestinian youth was killed by Palestinian security forces in Qabatiya, Jenin, during clashes with residents. I reiterate that violence against civilians, particularly against children, is unacceptable and must be condemned by all. Israeli security forces must also exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly necessary. All incidents must be thoroughly investigated.

Meanwhile, the situation around the holy sites in Jerusalem remained tense throughout the reporting period. Amid calls by religious and political leaders for Palestinians to pray en masse at the Muslim sites, there were limited clashes and arrests reported, including after Friday prayers. The Israeli police also issued orders temporarily restricting access to the site for several Palestinians, including a religious leader and former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and cited incitement and disturbance of the peace as the reasons for the suspension. The police also arrested a former Israeli Knesset member for ignoring police directives while visiting the site.

With no meaningful bilateral negotiations on the horizon, developments on the ground continued to undermine prospects for a two-State solution. Israeli authorities demolished or seized 28 Palestinian-owned structures, and 11 others were demolished by their owners following the receipt of demolition orders, which displaced some 47 people, including 12 women and 19 children. Of the structures demolished, 18 were in East Jerusalem. Most of them were targeted due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

During the reporting period, the Jerusalem Magistrate Court ordered the eviction of two Palestinian families from their homes in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, pursuant to a lawsuit brought by an Israeli settler-related organization. Some 80 other families in the area could be affected by similar eviction proceedings.

On 5 February, Israeli authorities demolished two structures at the settlement outpost Ma'ale Shlomo, near the Kokhav HaShahar settlement, and clashed with dozens of settlers who protested the move, leading to three arrests. On 20 February, the Prime Minister announced that he had approved the construction of some 3,000 housing units in the settlement of Givat Hamatos, as well as some 1,000 units in Beit Safafa for its Palestinian residents. He further declared that he would also allow the commencement of the planning process for 2,200 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Har Homa. Those projects, if implemented, would consolidate a ring of settlements cutting between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, significantly constraining the possibility of a future contiguous Palestinian State. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace.

Meanwhile, the threat of annexation remains. Israeli and United States officials have said that such a step would be advanced only after a joint committee completes a process of producing detailed maps of relevant areas of the occupied West Bank. On 15 February, the United States confirmed the formation of the joint committee. The Secretary-General has consistently spoken out against unilateral steps and plans for annexation. Such steps, including the possible annexation

of territory in the West Bank or similar moves, would have a devastating impact on the prospect for a two-State solution. They would close the door to negotiations, have negative repercussions across the region and severely undermine opportunities for normalization and regional peace.

I also take this opportunity to remind the Council that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to face major financial challenges. Without further financial support, critical services in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, will be suspended as of late April. That would result in serious humanitarian repercussions, particularly for some of the most acutely vulnerable communities, among them female-headed households below the poverty line. I urge Member States to continue supporting UNRWA's core programmes in order ensure that the Agency remains operational beyond April.

Turning briefly to intra-Palestinian developments, I regret to note that the prospects of reconciliation and elections remain stalled. Renewing the legitimacy of Palestinian national institutions by holding legislative and presidential elections, which have not taken place since 2006, is indeed critical. Palestinians must be allowed to exercise their democratic right to vote and elect their leaders and representatives. While the United Nations continues to support the Egyptian led Palestinian reconciliation efforts, the Palestinian national movement continues to be weakened by the lack of progress on unity. It is time for leaders to engage positively with Egypt, reverse this negative trajectory and take concrete steps to end division.

...

As negative trends on the ground continue, I would like to reiterate what I said before the Council earlier this month. Today it is not enough to reaffirm the internationally agreed parameters on how the conflict can be resolved. It is time to find our way back to the mutually agreed mediation framework that ensures that meaningful Israeli-Palestinian negotiations can resume. While there may be different interpretations and proposals on how to achieve a two-State solution, that remains our shared objective. As stated by the Secretary-General, the United Nations position on the two-State solution is defined by resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The past 48 hours have once again showed us how fragile the situation in Gaza is. Its population suffers under Hamas' rule and Israeli closures, while militant activity forces Israeli communities to live in constant fear of the next rocket attack. No amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will neither resolve the situation in Gaza nor the broader conflict. Gaza ultimately requires a political solution.

In the absence of progress towards resolving all final-status issues, our preventive diplomacy efforts continue to play an integral role in helping to ensure that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not escalate further and get pulled into the latest regional escalation. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis as they pursue a peaceful future.

## **VIII. SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*On 26 February, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#):*

I am very concerned about Israel's recent announcements regarding the advancement of settlement construction in Giv'at Hamatos and Har Homa, as well as the worrying plans for 3,500 units in the controversial E1 area of the occupied West Bank.

All settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. If the E1 plan were to be implemented, it would sever the connection between northern and southern West Bank, significantly undermining the chances for establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution.

I urge the Israeli authorities to refrain from such unilateral actions that fuel instability and further erode the prospects for resuming Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.”

## **IX. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE HOLDS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE IN KUALA LUMPUR**

*On 28 and 29 February, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held an International Conference on the Question of Palestine: “South-East Asian Support for the Rights of the Palestinian People”. The [Chair's summary](#) is reproduced below.*

The International Conference on the Question of Palestine: “Southeast Asian Support for the Rights of the Palestinian People” was convened in Kuala Lumpur on 28 and 29 February 2019 under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), in cooperation with the Government of Malaysia and the Perdana Global Peace Foundation (PGPF). Ahead of the Opening Session, the Committee Delegation held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad.

The Conference brought together Palestinian and international experts as well as civil society actors in Southeast Asia as a contribution towards the mobilization of efforts in support of the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It addressed the difficulties of life for Palestinians under the Israeli occupation, emphasizing the need for concerted action aimed at halting negative trends on the ground and at promoting a comprehensive and just two-State solution long-endorsed by the international community.

At the opening, the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Cheikh Niang (Senegal), recognised the “long-standing, principled support for the quest of the Palestinian people to be free of oppression and occupation” among the peoples of Southeast Asia. The path to achieve a just solution was clear: the establishment of two States – Israel and Palestine – based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital, as set out by relevant United Nations resolutions and international law. The occupation prevented a just solution because it profited from

the injustice of today's reality, cementing a system of exploitation, expropriation and annexation. Many painted the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an ethnic or a religious one. Instead, it was a conflict between those on the side of truth and justice, and those who are benefiting from false narratives and oppression. There were Israelis who also seek a way towards a just solution, with freedom and dignity for all. They were allies.

In his opening statement, Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator in Malaysia, representing Secretary-General António Guterres, reiterated the United Nations' commitment to helping the parties to the conflict overcome the current impasse and return to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation and realize a two-State solution. Noting that the Committee had convened this conference in times of tensions in the Middle East, he underlined that a political solution was needed more than ever. He went on to underscore the United Nations' position that annexation of Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank, if implemented, would not only be illegal under international law but would also close the door to negotiations and deal a devastating blow to prospects for a viable two-State solution. It would also have negative repercussions across the region, and severely undermine opportunities for peace. "The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization this year is an opportunity to uphold the values of the Charter to advance the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people," he said.

The representative of the State of Palestine, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York Ambassador Riyad Mansour, highlighted the historically strong relationship between Palestine and Malaysia. He strongly criticized the proposals presented by United States President Donald Trump, which he defined as a continuation of a policy that had already seen the recognition of Jerusalem as the sovereign capital of Israel, and the move of the US Embassy to the city. These actions were violations of international law and ran counter to Security Council resolutions. It was the collective responsibility of all to defend Jerusalem, he said, appealing to "brothers and sisters" in Malaysia for help. No single Palestinian would accept the proposals, which would divide Palestinian land.

"We are not looking for a new plan," he stated, adding that "what we need is not a new plan but a mechanism to implement existing agreements and United Nations resolutions." He went on to point out the need for Palestinian unity. "We must put our house in order," he said, calling for the holding of elections across the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

In his keynote address, Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad stated that powerful nations and self-proclaimed defenders of justice, freedom and democracy were keeping silent on the suffering of the Palestinian people or, worse, were party to the perpetrations of injustice and cruelty inflicted on the Palestinians. Noting that the theme of the conference was "Southeast Asian support for the rights of the Palestinian people," he said it aptly highlighted the key message on the "Rights of the Palestinian People" consistent and in line for what the United Nations stood. Drawing attention to the remarkable achievements of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), he urged the bloc's member states to continue their cooperation with the Palestinian people not only in political and economic affairs, but also in the pursuit of justice and peace for them. "Our collective voice should also extend a united front in supporting the rights of the Palestinians. This is the primary purpose of this peace Conference," he said.



Turning to the US proposals, he said that they endorsed and fomented Israel's position without any attempts for dialogue or negotiation with Palestinian representatives from the West Bank or Gaza. This was a mockery of international efforts to find a solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian crisis, contrary to a two-State solution, and did not respect previously signed agreements and commitments. If implemented, Israel would be allowed to annex all its illegal settlements, now littered across the West Bank, as well as the vast agricultural basin of the Jordan Valley. Malaysia stood by its position of support for the creation of an independent State of Palestine through a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

During the first panel, themed "*Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*", speakers discussed how the announcement of the US proposal affected the situation on the ground and the international efforts to resolve the conflict. Ninety-four per cent of the Palestinians rejected the plan because it fell far short of their minimum expectations. Its implementation would deprive Palestinians of basic rights, confiscate more Palestinian land and ultimately serve the interests of Israel. The core of the plan was not an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians but, instead, one between Israel and the United States. This was proof that the United States had abandoned its role as a mediator. Yet, participants stated, what was needed was not only to understand the content of the more than 180 pages of the US proposal, but also to come up with a detailed counteroffer.

Within the United States, the plan had blown up a status quo where Israel could always count on bipartisan support. Now, all Democratic contenders for the presidency were opposed to the US proposal, emphasizing support for a two-State solution, which the plan would effectively destroy. Thus, the future of the plan, and of US policy toward the question of Palestine, rested on the outcome of the 2020 elections.

Within the international community, it would be important to focus on the tenets of international law. For example, the International Law Commission had offered just one illustration of the kind of act that States should refrain from: formally or informally recognizing as legal "attempted acquisition of sovereignty over territory through denial of the right of self-determination of peoples." A more fitting characterization of Israel's actions in the West Bank would be hard to come by, and such arguments should be used by the champions of the two-State solution. Other speakers argued for enhanced civil society initiatives like boycotts and divestment, as a complement to collective action by Governments, which should also include the imposition of sanctions on Israel.

The situation of UNRWA was a further focus of discussion. The agency had been surprised about the US decision to cut its funding because as recently as 2017 both had signed an agreement on the continuation of funding. In December 2019, the UNRWA's mandate had been renewed for another three years but there was concern that in the runup to the next renewal, in 2022, there would be attempts to effect substantial changes to the mandate.

In the second panel, on "*Civil Society Action*", speakers outlined various anti-occupation campaigns in the Palestinian territory. Among them were non-violent popular resistance to make the world aware of the segregation in which Palestinians live, campaigns to train Palestinians on how to document crimes committed by Israeli forces and publish them on media to counter soldiers and settlers who deny their violations, and projects to preserve olive groves. Representatives of

Palestinian NGOs were looking forward to ongoing communication with counterparts in Southeast Asia.

Palestinian speakers called on the international community to help end Israeli impunity, apply international law and justice, help realize their rights to self-determination, and speak out against the Trump plan. “We are not asking for more human rights than others, but we are not accepting fewer human rights than others,” one of them said.

Another speaker shared her experience providing humanitarian support to the Palestinian people over the past four decades, from working with the Palestine Red Crescent Society as orthopaedic surgeon helping Palestinians in Lebanon to organising relief for the Gaza Strip.

Speakers acknowledged that the divisions between the Palestinian factions, and the separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, made it more difficult for civil society organizations to mobilize resources. Further, they pointed out that the occupation was profitable for Israel, while the Palestinian economy was suffering from the occupation. Addressing options of support in Southeast Asia, while it would be difficult for Malaysian civil society organizations to come and help Palestinians due to the restrictions under occupation, they could help educate the public in their country and the region on the question of Palestine.

The third panel on “*Regional Support for Palestinian Rights*” outlined how governments in the region had generally supported the Palestinian cause. At the civil society level, there was active support in some countries and at least passive backing in others. Since the heyday of support for the Palestinian people among the Global South in the 1960s and 1970s, Israel had consolidated power through its association with capitalist prosperity, whereas Southeast Asian support for Palestinians declined.

Local organisations, like PGPF, advocated for the Palestinian cause through holding fora and using media, as well as supporting projects in the occupied Palestinian territory including sewage pipes installation, desalination, and setting up computer laboratories at universities. It also built kindergartens and started a rehabilitation centre for Palestinians wounded during the "Great March of Return" protests in Gaza.

There were several initiatives that civil society could undertake, including measures to counter Israel’s “memoricide” – the destruction of individual and collective memory in an attempt to wipe out Palestinian civilization and identity – as well as counter the institutionalized impunity of Israel by holding tribunals, which could be an impetus for the International Criminal Court to take action. Collective efforts could lead to impactful outcomes for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Speakers argued that there was much to learn from European counterparts, including on the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Other groups, such as the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) were engaged in capacity building and forming national and regional alliances. These helped creating new narratives and were good at articulating the problems. The organisation started working with Palestinian youth in Australia and New Zealand, holding one-on-one webinars and boot camps, and also organised the visit of Australian parliamentarians to Palestine. Panellists also explored measures civil society organizations can take to influence government policy towards Palestine.

In the closing session Ambassador Riyad Mansour (Palestine) said that the State of Palestine looked forward to more high-level exchanges with Malaysia. He urged States to shoulder responsibility to defeat the current US proposals and support the international consensus to end the occupation, based on the pre-1967 borders. As the United Nations Secretary-General always said, there was no Plan B to a two-State solution. It was the collective responsibility of all, Palestinians and others, to implement the global plan.

The Deputy Secretary General at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Ms. Nadzirah Osman expressed hope that the international community would find a lasting two-State solution that would allow both sides to live side-by-side in peace. Welcoming the list of companies doing business in settlements published by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, she urged all countries to take a closer look at the list. Settlements were illegal under international law. The International Criminal Court was prepared to open an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by Israel. The international community could not sit idle, watching Palestinians being killed and their land confiscated; it must galvanize efforts and ensure the question of Palestine remained high on the United Nations agenda.

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