



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

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relevant to the question of Palestine

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**I. RESPECTING FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN GAZA  
IS PRE-CONDITION TO ACHIEVING PEACE,  
SAYS UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR AS HE WELCOMES TRUCE IN GAZA**

*On 1 September, Michael Lynk, Special rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, issued the following [press release](#):*

A United Nations human rights expert has expressed deep concerns about the recent rise in armed violence in Gaza, and has welcomed the announcement on Monday that Israel and Hamas have reached a truce to halt the current hostilities.

However, Michael Lynk, special rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, cautioned that true peace, and the badly-needed reconstruction of Gaza, will only come with full respect of the fundamental rights of the two million Palestinians living there.

“Gaza has been reduced to a humanitarian whisper,” said Lynk. “Behind the current hostilities – the launching of rockets and incendiary balloons by Palestinian armed groups and the disproportionate use of targeted missile strikes by Israel – is the long-term impoverishment of Gaza by Israel’s 13-year-old comprehensive blockade. This amounts to collective punishment of the entire civilian population in Gaza, which adds immeasurably to the suffering of Gazans and wider tensions in the region.”

In August, Israel closed the fishing zone off Gaza, largely shuttered the Karem Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom crossing – the only commercial crossing into Gaza – and halted fuel supplies to the territory. This fuel embargo has caused Gaza’s sole power plant to shut down, reducing electricity availability to between four to six hours a day across the Strip and restricting operations at its sewage treatment plants, and diminishing the supply of water to homes.

“Instead of meaningful steps to end the blockade of Gaza to relieve civilians, Israel has maintained its tight grip. We are no longer on the edge of a humanitarian crisis, but in the middle of one. This is purely a human-made disaster, and could be quickly reversed if the political will existed,” said Lynk.

“This blockade has no meaningful security rationale,” he added. “It inflicts great misery on the two million civilians in Gaza, while imposing little harm on any security targets. Israel remains the occupying power, and international law – including Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention – strictly forbids the use of collective punishment by the occupier.”

As a result of this prolonged blockade, Gaza’s two million residents endure a collapsing health care system, undrinkable and unaffordable water, inadequate and sporadic power supplies, an economy on its back, deep poverty and among the world’s highest unemployment rates, said Lynk.

“Gaza is on the verge of becoming unlivable. There is no comparable situation in the world where a substantial population has endured such a permanent lockdown, largely unable to travel or trade, and controlled by an occupying power in breach of its solemn international human rights

and humanitarian obligations. Our international standards of dignity and morality do not allow such experiments in human despair.”

An emerging concern is the new appearance of community transmission of Covid-19 in Gaza. Perversely, Gaza’s misfortune to be a blockaded territory has meant that, until now, the global pandemic has not entered the territory in any numbers.

“Should the Covid-19 pandemic take root in Gaza, the consequences would likely be very serious,” he said. “While the international community has been providing the medical supplies to deal with the pandemic, Gaza lacks the health care infrastructure – particularly regarding hospital capacity and the quantity of health professionals, testing kits and respiratory equipment – to manage a wide-spread outbreak. The cutting of fuel supplies by Israel throughout August makes a humanitarian crisis even worse.”

Lynk said what Gaza requires are not temporary band-aids but an end to the blockade – as repeatedly called for by the international community – and tools to chart the course to economic development and self-determination with the rest of Palestine. “Providing Gazans with hope for the future and a genuine path to prosperity and freedom will go a long way to answering Israel’s security concerns.”

Beyond lifting the blockade, he called for construction of a Gaza seaport, building of new power, water and sewage treatment plants, access for the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Marine natural gas field off Gaza’s coast, a substantial increase in export permits from Gaza and work permits in Israel, an industrial zone, the entry of much larger quantities of construction materials, and freedom of movement for Gazans.

“The announced truce has to be the first step towards the full realization of human rights in Gaza, and not another temporary step waiting for the next round of hostilities,” Lynk said.

## **II. UNRWA LAUNCHES US\$ 94.6 MILLION COVID-19 APPEAL**

*On 4 September, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued this [press release](#):*

Today, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) launched a US\$ 94.6 million COVID-19 Appeal. This funding is required by the Agency to mitigate the worst impacts of the pandemic on 5.6 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East until the end of December 2020, with a special focus on health, cash assistance and education.

Since July, COVID-19 cases have worryingly surged in the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria, with more recent increases in Jordan and the first instances of local transmission in Gaza recorded in late-August. The Appeal is crucial for controlling the spread of the pandemic in Palestine refugee camps and to help prevent a major outbreak. The Agency’s initial appeal allowed for the continued provision of health and hospitalization, as well as the adoption of measures that largely helped contain the spread of the virus, such as home delivery of medicines, telemedicine and triage systems.

“UNRWA will continue the strict measures it put in place as a result of COVID-19 at least until the end of December, said UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini. This new flash Appeal will sustain our health, education and emergency services. In parallel, we will step up relief interventions to address the growing poverty and despair among Palestine refugees.”

The ramifications of COVID-19-related lockdowns have crippled economies across the region, leaving millions without a stable source of income. UNRWA will support Palestine refugees with cash assistance and food aid. In Gaza, the Agency provided home delivery of food parcels from March to August and special risk mitigation measures will be introduced at food distribution centres if the situation allows for regular distributions to resume. In Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Gaza, UNRWA will provide cash allowance to nearly one million Palestine refugees. Given the outbreak of COVID-19 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNRWA will support families in quarantine with food and non-food items.

This fall, UNRWA will be welcoming over half a million girls and boys ‘Back to Learning’ across its five fields of operation, using an array of innovative modalities, including in-person, remote and rotational teaching. UNRWA prioritizes the safety of school students and their families and will take all possible measures to ensure a safe learning environment for students.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini noted: “I call on our global partners to continue helping millions of Palestine refugees stay safe. In these uncertain times, the predictability of the Agency’s services, particularly health and education, help maintain a sense of normality and stability in Palestine refugee communities.”

### **III. COVID-19 DEVASTATES THE SHATTERED ECONOMY OF THE OPT, UNCTAD REPORTS**

*On 8 September, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) issued the following [press release](#):*

COVID-19 has compounded the dire economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), which were moving from bad to worse before the pandemic, according to the latest UNCTAD report on its assistance to the Palestinian people.

The pandemic struck at a particularly distressing time for the oPt. Even before COVID-19 hit, forecasts for the Palestinian economy in 2020 and 2021 were already bleak, with GDP per capita projected to decrease by 3% to 4.5%, according to the report.

High poverty and unemployment rates had persisted and GDP per capita declined for the third consecutive year as the Palestinian economy continued to slide in 2019 and the first half of 2020, the report says.

In 2019, real GDP grew by less than one percentage point, not better than the two preceding years. The West Bank registered its lowest growth rate since 2012 (1.15%), while Gaza’s growth was virtually zero as it failed to rebound from the two consecutive GDP contractions of -7.7% and -3.5% in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

## **An economy under siege**

UNCTAD routinely assesses and reports on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people, as requested by several UN General Assembly resolutions.

Restrictions and leakage of fiscal resources continue to undermine the Palestinian economy. UNCTAD previously estimated the annual leakage of Palestinian fiscal resources to the Israeli treasury at 3.7% of GDP or 17.8% of total tax revenues.

In addition, in March of this year a new annual deduction of \$144 million from Palestinian clearance revenues has been put in place - equivalent to the payments made by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to families of Palestinians in Israeli prisons or killed in attacks or alleged attacks against Israelis.

The fiscal standoff weighed heavily on the economy and constrained GDP growth. The impact of the fiscal loss to occupation has been compounded by the substantial decline in donor support to the PNA. Donor budget support fell from a high 32% of GDP in 2008 to 3.5% in 2019.

The measures imposed by Israel, decline in donor support, and the ensuing poor economic performance, have resulted in a significant deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the oPt, the report notes.

The depression-level unemployment rate increased from 31% in 2018 to 33% in 2019, while the poverty level rose from 25.8% to 29.2% between 2011 and 2017 and has since worsened.

In Gaza, 80% of the population depends on unstable international assistance, lacking food security, hygiene resources, health care, electricity and safe drinking water.

## **COVID-19 deepens the economic pain**

Lockdown measures to control COVID-19 since it was reported in the oPt in early March have had grave fiscal implications. Barely a month after the outbreak, revenues collected by the PNA from trade, tourism and transfers declined to their lowest levels in 20 years.

The fiscal impact is heightened by the additional expenditure on health, social welfare and support for the private sector necessitated by the pandemic.

Furthermore, the Palestinian economy has been highly dependent on official and private transfers. Both, however, are projected to decline in the aftermath of the pandemic. Donor support in 2020 is expected to fall to about \$266 million, the lowest in more than a decade.

Various estimates on the cost of the pandemic point to an economic loss in the range of 7% to 35% of GDP, depending on forecast assumptions about the severity and duration of the pandemic. Fiscal revenues are expected to nosedive in tandem with GDP.

Under occupation, the PNA lacks the policy space and economic policy tools to deal with the massive challenge posed by the pandemic. It has no access to external borrowing, no national currency, no independent monetary policy and no fiscal space.

“The international community should urgently redouble support to the Palestinian people to enable them to cope with the economic fallout from the pandemic. There is no alternative to donor support for ensuring the survival of the Palestinian economy,” UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi said.

### **Palestinian women pay the heaviest cost under occupation**

The report highlights the distinct plight of Palestinian women under occupation. It maintains that the dynamics of occupation affect demographic and regional groups in different ways, with women, youth and Gaza suffering the most.

Under occupation, the agricultural sector has diminished with the continuous loss of land and water. Its share in GDP declined from 35% in 1972 to 4% in recent years.

Palestinian women have paid the heaviest cost, as the decline of the agricultural sector has deprived them of opportunities in their traditional sector of employment, with no alternatives emerging in the post-occupation era.

Furthermore, women are affected differently by other occupation practices such as house demolitions and barriers to movement, which limit their participation in education and the labour market.

In some areas, parents hesitate to send girls to school permanently or during security crises. This results in low attendance and high dropout rates. The cumulative effects place women at increased risk of poverty and marginalization.

### **Settlements: facts on the ground and looming annexation**

By the end of 2018, there were 150 settlements and 128 outposts in the West Bank, which according to UN Security Council resolutions 2334 and 476, constitute flagrant violations under international law.

The UNCTAD report warns that the looming *de jure* annexation of settlements by the occupying power, if it proceeds, would deal a devastating blow to the two-state solution and undermine prospects for peace in the region.

In 2019 and early 2020, the occupying power accelerated the construction of settlements even though they are illegal under international law.

To make room for settlement expansion, the Israeli zoning and planning regime makes it nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits to build in their own land for any purpose. Palestinians are thus forced to build without permits at the risk of punitive demolitions at their own expense.

In 2019, Israel demolished or seized 622 Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including 127 intended for humanitarian assistance.

Demolition is a traumatic experience that results in poverty, displacement, loss of shelter, family separation, psychological distress and deprivation of basic services such as health care and education.

Meanwhile, by 2019, more than 1 million of Palestinians' productive trees had been destroyed by occupation since 2000.

#### **IV. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL APPEALS FOR SUPPORT FROM LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES**

*On 9 September, the UNRWA Commissioner-General delivered the following [statement](#) at the 154<sup>th</sup> session of the League of Arab States Council at the Ministerial Level.*

It is a privilege to address the Arab League today about the situation of Palestine refugees and the challenges that UNRWA faces.

The support of the Arab League and its members is crucial to the Agency in the face of growing political and economic challenges. Palestine refugees should continue to be protected and supported as long as their status remains unchanged.

Crises in the region remain unresolved and new ones always seem to be unfolding.

In Lebanon, the devastating explosion in Beirut port has shattered the human security of thousands, including around 200,000 Palestine refugees. Lebanon faces immense financial, economic and political challenges.

In Syria, nine years of conflict and a freefalling economy pose enormous humanitarian challenges and many Palestine refugee families are said to be cutting on food.

In the West Bank, demolitions, incursions, detentions and violence remain a daily occurrence; and Gaza is constantly on the edge of implosion.

Excellencies,

Whilst the challenges hitting Palestine refugees and UNRWA are multiple, my immediate priority on my appointment as Commissioner-General was to protect the Palestine refugee community from COVID-19.

For several months, UNRWA managed to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19 in the densely populated Palestine refugee camps. We maintained all our services, but shifted to distance learning, telemedicine and home delivery for essential drugs and food.

Since July, however, we are racing against the clock, as the number of COVID-19 cases amongst Palestine refugees jumped from less than 200 to over 4,300 last Thursday.

And now, COVID-19 is fueling a pandemic of abject poverty.

Despair and hopelessness are growing among Palestine refugees and they turn to UNRWA for more assistance.



Despair is a dangerous feeling in a highly volatile region.

In such an unpredictable and unstable environment, we need, more than ever, a predictable and stable UNRWA.

Our greatest challenge is our financial stability. We are operating at full capacity with inadequate resources.

Year after year, month after month, UNRWA is on the edge of a financial collapse. This is not a sustainable model.

Despite the severity of the financial situation, I do not wish to add to the anxiety and insecurity that refugees feel every day by making alarmist public statements.

Excellencies,

As of today, I do not know whether we will have adequate resources to run UNRWA operations until the end of the year. Nevertheless, I have taken the decision to make Palestine refugee children going back to learning a priority. I am delighted to announce that last week more than half a million girls and boys started to go back to learning in UNRWA schools. Education is central to all of our efforts to give them hope for a better future.

But sustaining education requires a different funding model.

Our budgets are prepared ahead of time, they are predictable.

Over the last 5 years - with the exception of 2018 - UNRWA's Programme Budget - the backbone of the Agency - has not been adequately resourced to deliver with the quality that meets the commitments of UNRWA's mandate.

Funding has constantly been unpredictable, with no visibility beyond few weeks.

UNRWA is deeply appreciative of Members of the Arab League who support the Agency with financial contributions.

I have already appealed to UN Member States to match their political support for the UNRWA mandate with adequate resources.

I now appeal to Members of the Arab League to do the same.

In the immediate term, between now and the end of the year, UNRWA urgently needs 200 million US dollars for its Programme Budget, US\$ 95 million to respond to COVID-19, and US\$ 43 million for Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, primarily to sustain food and cash assistance to one million poor refugees in Gaza and over 400,000 in Syria and Lebanon.

Failing to receive the necessary funds will affect vital services to millions of Palestine refugees.

If we cannot deliver on our mandate due to inadequate resources, I will have no other choice than to turn to the United Nations General Assembly for guidance about what part of the mandate it wishes to prioritize.

Together we can avoid this. With your continuous generous support, we shall collectively help keep a sense of normality, predictability and stability among Palestine refugees and within the region.

Let me close by welcoming the United Arab Emirates as the new Chair of the Advisory Commission on UNRWA.

Thank you.

## **V. UNLAWFUL DEMOLITIONS IN THE WEST BANK SPIKE DURING COVID-19, SAYS HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR**

*On 10 September, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian Territory Jamie McGoldrick made the following [statement](#):*

The period from March to August 2020 saw the demolition or confiscation of 389 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, on average, 65 per month, the highest average destruction rate in four years.

Early during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Israeli authorities indicated that they would restrain their longstanding policy of demolishing inhabited Palestinian homes. Sadly, demolitions during the period March-August 2020 left 442 Palestinians homeless, further exposing many to risks associated with the pandemic. In August alone, 205 people were displaced, more than in any other single month since January 2017.

Beyond homes, the targeted properties included water, hygiene or sanitation assets, and structures used for agriculture, among others, undermining the access of many to livelihoods and services. Moreover, 50 of the structures had been given to Palestinians as humanitarian aid, and their destruction hit the most vulnerable of all, and undermined emergency operations.

Of specific concern is the Israeli authorities' increased use of an expedited procedure (Order 1797) for the removal of structures as soon as 96 hours after delivering a notice, largely preventing owners from being heard before a judicial body.

When the Israeli authorities demolish, or force people to demolish, homes and sources of livelihood, they typically cite a lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, due to the restrictive and discriminatory planning regime, and leaves them no venues for authorized construction. The destruction of property in an occupied territory is prohibited under international humanitarian law, unless absolutely necessary for military operations. Moreover, the demolition of essential structures during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly worrying as it further compounds the overall situation in the West Bank.

The global pandemic has increased the needs and vulnerabilities of Palestinians, who are already trapped in the abnormality of prolonged military occupation. Unlawful demolitions exacerbate these vulnerabilities and must stop immediately.

## VI. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION: ECOSOC RESOLUTION

*On 14 September, the Economic and Social Council adopted the following resolution ([E/RES/2021/4](#)):*

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions [74/88](#) of 13 December 2019 and [74/243](#) of 19 December 2019,

*Recalling also* its resolution [2019/29](#) of 23 July 2019,

*Guided* by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations affirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and recalling relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) of 22 November 1967, [252 \(1968\)](#) of 21 May 1968, [338 \(1973\)](#) of 22 October 1973, [465 \(1980\)](#) of 1 March 1980, [497 \(1981\)](#) of 17 December 1981 and [2334 \(2016\)](#) of 23 December 2016,

*Recalling* the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, including resolutions [ES-10/13](#) of 21 October 2003, [ES-10/14](#) of 8 December 2003, [ES-10/15](#) of 20 July 2004 and [ES-10/17](#) of 15 December 2006,

*Taking note* of the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, as transmitted by the Secretary-General,<sup>1</sup>

*Reaffirming* the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>2</sup> to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>3</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>4</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>5</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments are applicable and must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan,

*Noting with concern* that more than 70 years have passed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [181 \(II\)](#) of 29 November 1947 and 53 years since the occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in 1967,

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<sup>1</sup> [A/75/86-E/2020/62](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>3</sup> See General Assembly resolution [2200 A \(XXI\)](#), annex.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

*Taking note*, in this regard, of Palestine's accession to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions as well as other international treaties,

*Taking note also* of General Assembly resolution [67/19](#) of 29 November 2012,

*Stressing* the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement on all tracks on the basis of Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [425 \(1978\)](#) of 19 March 1978, [1397 \(2002\)](#) of 12 March 2002, [1515 \(2003\)](#) of 19 November 2003, [1544 \(2004\)](#) of 19 May 2004, [1850 \(2008\)](#) of 16 December 2008 and [2334 \(2016\)](#), the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative<sup>6</sup> and the Quartet road map,<sup>7</sup> as well as compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people,

*Reaffirming* the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, and expressing concern in that regard about the exploitation, endangerment and depletion of natural resources by Israel, the occupying Power, and Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly as a result of settlement activities, which are illegal under international law and which, deplorably, continued during the reporting period,

*Convinced* that the Israeli occupation has gravely impeded the efforts to achieve environmentally sustainable development and a sound economic environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and expressing grave concern about the consequent deterioration of economic and living conditions,

*Expressing alarm*, in this regard, about the extremely high levels of unemployment in the Gaza Strip in particular, which remains at over 40 per cent, with youth unemployment reaching 60 per cent, exacerbated by the prolonged Israeli closures and severe economic and movement restrictions that in effect amount to a blockade, and the continuing negative repercussions of the military operations in the Gaza Strip on economic and social infrastructure and living conditions,

*Commending*, despite the many constraints, including the obstacles imposed by the ongoing Israeli occupation, the efforts of the Palestinian Government to improve the economic and social situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the areas of governance, the rule of law and human rights, livelihoods and productive sectors, education and culture, health, social protection, infrastructure and water,

*Stressing* the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which aims, inter alia, at enhancing development support and assistance to the Palestinian people and strengthening institutional capacity in line with Palestinian national priorities,

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<sup>6</sup> [A/56/1026-S/2002/932](#), annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>7</sup> [S/2003/529](#), annex.

*Gravely concerned* about the accelerated construction of settlements and implementation of other related measures by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions, and stressing that such illegal measures are main sources of other Israeli violations and discriminatory policies,

*Encouraging* all States and international organizations to continue to actively pursue policies to ensure respect for their obligations under international law with regard to all illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly Israeli settlements,

*Taking note* 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,<sup>8</sup>

*Expressing deep concern* about the rising incidence of violence, harassment, provocation, vandalism and incitement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in particular by illegal armed Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including children, and their properties, including homes, historic and religious sites and agricultural lands, and calling for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard,

*Gravely concerned* by the serious repercussions on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people caused by Israel's construction of the wall and its associated regime inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and the resulting violation of their economic and social rights, including the rights to work, to health, to education, to property, to an adequate standard of living and to freedom of access and movement,

*Recalling*, in that regard, the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,<sup>9</sup> and General Assembly resolution [ES-10/15](#), and stressing the need to comply with the obligations mentioned therein,

*Deploring* all loss of innocent civilian life and injury to scores of civilians, and calling upon all parties to fully respect international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, including for the protection of civilian life, as well as for the promotion of human security, the de-escalation of the situation, the exercise of restraint, including from provocative actions and rhetoric, and the establishment of a stable environment conducive to the pursuit of peace,

*Expressing grave concern* at the extensive destruction by Israel, the occupying Power, of properties, including the increased demolition of homes, economic institutions, historical landmarks, agricultural lands and orchards, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including

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<sup>8</sup> [A/HRC/22/63](#).

<sup>9</sup> See [A/ES-10/273](#) and [A/ES-10/273/Corr.1](#).

East Jerusalem, in particular in connection with its construction of settlements and the wall and confiscation of land, contrary to international law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem,

*Expressing grave concern also* over the continuing forced displacement and dispossession of Palestinian civilians, including the Bedouin community, due to the continuing and intensifying policy of home demolitions, evictions and revocation of residency rights in and around occupied East Jerusalem, as well as measures to further isolate the city from its natural Palestinian environs, which have seriously exacerbated the already critical socioeconomic situation being faced by the Palestinian population,

*Expressing grave concern further* about ongoing Israeli military operations and policies of closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, the imposition of crossing closures, checkpoints and a permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the consequent negative impact on the socioeconomic situation of the Palestinian people, in particular the Palestine refugee population, which remains that of a humanitarian crisis,

*Expressing grave concern*, in particular, over the continuing crisis in the Gaza Strip as a result of the prolonged Israeli closures and severe economic and movement restrictions that in effect amount to a blockade, stressing that the situation is unsustainable, as reflected in numerous reports, including the report of 26 August 2016 of the United Nations country team, entitled “Gaza: two years after”, and calling in that regard for the full implementation of Security Council resolution [1860 \(2009\)](#) of 8 January 2009 with a view to ensuring the full opening of the border crossings for the sustained and regular movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian aid, commercial flows and construction materials, and emphasizing the need for security for all civilian populations,

*Deploring* the conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 and the civilian casualties caused, including the killing of and injury to thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and the elderly, as well as the widespread destruction of or damage to thousands of homes and vital civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water, sanitation and electricity networks, economic, industrial and agricultural properties, public institutions, religious sites and United Nations schools and facilities, as well as the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and any violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in this regard,

*Gravely concerned* about the consequent prolonged and extensive negative impact of the military operations of July and August 2014, as well as the military operations between December 2008 and January 2009 and of November 2012, on economic conditions, the provision of social services and the social, humanitarian and physical living conditions of the Palestinian civilian population, including the Palestine refugee population,

*Recalling*, in that regard, the relevant United Nations reports, including those of the Economic and Social Council, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Human Rights Council,

*Expressing deep concern* about the short- and long-term detrimental impact of such widespread destruction and the hampering of the reconstruction process, by Israel, the occupying Power, on the socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, where the humanitarian crisis continues to deepen, and calling in that regard for the immediate acceleration and fulfilment of the reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the donor countries, including the disbursement of funds pledged at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, held on 12 October 2014,

*Gravely concerned* about various reports of the United Nations and specialized agencies regarding the substantial aid dependency caused by prolonged border closures, inordinate rates of unemployment, widespread poverty and severe humanitarian hardships, including food insecurity and rising health-related problems, including high levels of malnutrition, among the Palestinian people, especially children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing grave concern* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women and peaceful demonstrators, and emphasizing that the Palestinian civilian population must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Emphasizing* the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians, and calling for the cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, and all firing of rockets,

*Expressing deep concern* that thousands of Palestinians, including many children and women, continue to be held in Israeli prisons or detention centres under harsh conditions, including unhygienic conditions, solitary confinement, excessive use of administrative detention, including of children, lack of proper medical care and widespread medical neglect, including for ill prisoners, with the risk of fatal consequences, and denial of family visits and of due process, that impair their well-being, and expressing deep concern also about any ill-treatment and harassment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees and all reports of torture,

*Conscious* of the urgent need for the reconstruction and development of the economic and social infrastructure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as the urgent need to address the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people, including by ensuring the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance and the sustained and regular flow of persons and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip,

*Recognizing* the efforts being undertaken by the Palestinian Government, with international support, to reform, develop and strengthen its institutions and infrastructure, emphasizing the need to preserve and further develop Palestinian institutions and infrastructure, despite the obstacles presented by the ongoing Israeli occupation, and commending in this regard the ongoing efforts to develop the institutions of an independent Palestinian State, including through the implementation of the Palestinian National Policy Agenda: National Priorities, Policies and Policy Interventions (2017–2022),



*Expressing concern* about the risks posed to the significant achievements made, as confirmed by the positive assessments made by international institutions regarding readiness for statehood, including by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, owing to the negative impact of ongoing instability and the financial crisis being faced by the Palestinian Government and the continued absence of a credible political horizon,

*Commending*, in that regard, the important work being done by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the donor community in support of the economic and social development of the Palestinian people in line with their national development and State-building plan, as well as the vital assistance being provided in the humanitarian field,

*Affirming* the need to support the Palestinian Government of national consensus in its assumption of full government responsibilities in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in all fields, as well as through its presence at Gaza's crossing points, and Palestinian national reconciliation, and emphasizing the need for the respect and preservation of the territorial integrity and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Calling upon* both parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map in cooperation with the Quartet,

*Aware* that development and fostering healthy economic, social and environmental conditions are difficult under occupation and best promoted in circumstances of peace and stability,

1. *Calls for* the full opening of the border crossings of the Gaza Strip, in line with Security Council resolution [1860 \(2009\)](#), to ensure humanitarian access as well as the sustained and regular flow of persons and goods and the lifting of all movement restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, including those restrictions arising from ongoing Israeli military operations and the multilayered closure system, and for other urgent measures to be taken to alleviate the serious humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is dire in the Gaza Strip, and also calls for compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with all of its legal obligations under international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions in that regard;

2. *Stresses* the need to preserve the territorial contiguity, unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as to and from the outside world;

3. *Also stresses* the need to preserve and develop Palestinian national institutions and infrastructure for the provision of vital public services to the Palestinian civilian population and to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights, including economic and social rights;



4. *Demands* that Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed in Paris on 29 April 1994;<sup>10</sup>

5. *Calls upon* Israel to restore and replace civilian properties, vital infrastructure, agricultural lands and government institutions that have been damaged or destroyed as a result of its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

6. *Reiterates* the call for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access of 15 November 2005, particularly the urgent and uninterrupted reopening of all crossings into the Gaza Strip, which is crucial to ensuring the passage of foodstuffs and essential supplies, including construction materials and adequate fuel supplies, as well as to ensuring the unhindered access of the United Nations and related agencies and regular commercial flows necessary for economic recovery to and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and emphasizes the need for security for all civilian populations;

7. *Calls upon* all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949;

8. *Reaffirms* the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, and calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, endanger or cause loss or depletion of those resources;

9. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destruction of homes and properties, economic institutions and agricultural lands and orchards in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan, and to prevent Israeli settlers from perpetrating such illegal activities;

10. *Also calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to end immediately its exploitation of natural resources, including water and mining resources, and to cease the dumping of all kinds of waste materials in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which gravely threaten their natural resources, namely, the water, land and energy resources, and present a serious environmental hazard and health threat to the civilian populations, and also calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to remove all obstacles that obstruct the implementation of critical environmental projects, including the sewage treatment plants in the Gaza Strip, notably the provision of the electric power needed for the work of the northern Gaza emergency sewage treatment plant, and stresses in this regard the urgency of the reconstruction and development of water infrastructure, including the desalination facility project for the Gaza Strip;

11. *Calls for* the assistance necessary for the safe removal of all unexploded ordnance in the Gaza Strip, which endangers Palestinian lives and negatively impacts the environment, as well as reconstruction and development efforts, and welcomes the efforts exerted by the Mine Action Service of the United Nations to date;

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<sup>10</sup> See [A/49/180-S/1994/727](#), annex, entitled "Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area", annex IV.

12. *Reaffirms* that the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and related infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to economic and social development and to the achievement of peace, and calls for the full cessation of all settlement and settlement-related activity, including full cessation of all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, legal status and character of the occupied territories, including in particular in and around occupied East Jerusalem, in compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War;

13. *Calls for* accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and recalls in this regard Security Council resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994 and stresses the need for its implementation;

14. *Also calls for* urgent attention to the plight and the rights, in accordance with international law, of prisoners and detainees, and calls for efforts between the two sides for the further release of prisoners and detainees, and deplores the practice of withholding the bodies of those killed, and calls for the release of the bodies that have not yet been returned to their relatives, in line with international humanitarian law and human rights law, in order to ensure dignified closure in accordance with their religious beliefs and traditions;

15. *Reaffirms* that Israel's ongoing construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is isolating East Jerusalem, fragmenting the West Bank and seriously debilitating the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and calls in that regard for full compliance with the legal obligations mentioned in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and in General Assembly resolution [ES-10/15](#) and subsequent relevant resolutions;

16. *Calls upon* Israel to comply with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and to facilitate visits of the Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan whose family members reside in their mother homeland, the Syrian Arab Republic, via the Qunaytirah entrance;

17. *Emphasizes* the importance of the work of United Nations organizations and agencies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority;

18. *Welcomes and urges* further engagement by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator to assist, in cooperation with concerned partners, in the efforts to address urgent infrastructure, humanitarian and economic development needs, including through the implementation of projects endorsed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians;

19. *Expresses appreciation* to the Member States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations that have provided and continue to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, which has helped to ameliorate their critical economic and social conditions, and urges the continued provision of assistance commensurate with increased socioeconomic and humanitarian needs and in cooperation with official Palestinian institutions and consistent with the Palestinian National Development Plan;

20. *Reiterates* the importance of and need for increased and renewed international efforts on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [425 \(1978\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), [1515 \(2003\)](#), [1544 \(2004\)](#), [1850 \(2008\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#), and the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, as well as compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, in order to pave the way for the realization of the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders, and the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the present resolution and to continue to include in the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator an update on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies;

22. *Decides* to include the item entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” in the agenda of its 2022 session.

*1st plenary meeting  
14 September 2020*

## VII. SITUATION OF AND ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN WOMEN: ECOSOC RESOLUTION

*On 14 September, the Economic and Social Council adopted the following resolution ([E/RES/2021/5](#)):*

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>1</sup>*

*Recalling its relevant resolutions and all other relevant United Nations resolutions,*

*Recalling also Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) of 31 October 2000, including its call upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, and its emphasis on the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity,*

*Recalling further the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>2</sup>*

*Recalling the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>3</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,*

*Reaffirming the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and the need to end all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of human rights,*

*Reaffirming also the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>4</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>5</sup> the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>6</sup> and the political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session,<sup>7</sup> and reaffirming its commitment to their full, effective and accelerated implementation,*

*Reaffirming further the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, stressing the importance of women’s equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the*

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<sup>1</sup> [E/CN.6/2019/6](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>7</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2015, Supplement No. 7 ([E/2015/27](#))*, chap. I, sect. C, resolution 59/1, annex.

achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and welcoming in this regard the global call by international women leaders made on 1 July 2020,

*Expressing grave concern* about the continuing systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its impact on women and girls,

*Expressing grave concern also* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women and peaceful demonstrators, and emphasizing that civilian populations must be protected by all parties in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Stressing* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Deeply concerned* about violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, which is underrecognized and underreported, particularly at the community level, and its pervasiveness, which reflects discriminatory norms that reinforce stereotypes and gender inequality and the corresponding impunity and lack of accountability, reiterating the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres in all regions of the world, and re-emphasizing that violence against women and girls violates, and impairs their full enjoyment of, all human rights,

*Noting* the accession by Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, as well as other international treaties, and stressing the need to implement fully obligations under those instruments that protect the rights of women and girls, including during and post-conflict,

*Noting also* the importance of giving high priority to the swift adoption of the Family Protection Law to ensure that women and girls are protected from gender-based violence, including domestic violence,

*Underlining* the limitations on Palestinian jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which undermine the ability of the Palestinian Government to protect Palestinian women and girls in certain areas,

*Noting* the importance of the agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in facilitating the advancement and empowerment of women in development in line with General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women and girls with regard to the fulfilment of their rights, and their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society;

2. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all measures contrary to international law, as well as discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that violate the human rights of

the Palestinian people, and stresses that Palestinian civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict;

3. *Calls for* urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994;

4. *Calls upon* the parties to comply fully with their obligations, including as States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking fully into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

5. *Acknowledges* the contribution of national coalitions and committees in advancing women's rights, including those pertaining to resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention and combating violence against women;

6. *Welcomes* the adoption by the Palestinian Government of a national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) as well as of initiatives at the legislative, administrative and security levels to advance women's rights, notably in relation to family law and combating violence against women;

7. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families, including those living under Israeli occupation, and recognizes the importance of integrating gender considerations across humanitarian programming by seeking to ensure the provision of access to protection and the full range of medical, legal and livelihood and psychosocial services, including services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, without discrimination, and through ensuring that women and women's groups can participate equally and meaningfully and are supported in being leaders in humanitarian action;

8. *Calls upon* the international community, including the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>8</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip;

9. *Recalls* the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, and stresses that the situation of the Palestine refugees, including women and girls, continues to be a matter of grave concern and that they continue to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs, pending a just resolution of the

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<sup>8</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948;

10. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and urges in this regard the intensification and acceleration of renewed international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative,<sup>9</sup> the Quartet road map<sup>10</sup> and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;

11. *Stresses* the importance of efforts to increase the role of Palestinian women in decision-making and of their equal and meaningful participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and encourages Member States and observer States as well as the United Nations system to ensure systematic attention to, recognition of and support for the crucial role of Palestinian women at all levels by, inter alia, promoting women's capacity, leadership, participation and engagement in political, economic and humanitarian decision-making and by improving the gender balance in senior civilian government positions and in security functions;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report, and to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution in his report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Economic and Social Council at its 2021 session.

*1st plenary meeting  
14 September 2020*

## **VIII. “ABRAHAM ACCORD”, QUARTET - PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES AT UN HEADQUARTERS**

*On 16 September, the Secretary-General made the following [comments](#) during a press conference:*

...

**Question:** .... We all saw yesterday's ceremony at the White House, where Israel signed diplomatic agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Do you believe that this opens up new prospects for peace in the Middle East? And what is your message to the Palestinians, who were very angered about this?

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<sup>9</sup>[A/56/1026-S/2002/932](#), annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>10</sup>[S/2003/529](#), annex.



**Secretary-General:** I think it's important to seize the opportunities that exist. That agreement, independently of its context, managed one very important result, and that was the suspension of the annexation of occupied territory. Now, we always have said that that annexation would have dramatic consequences to the peace and stability in the region, would undermine the two-State solution. And we believe that the two-State solution is the only way to address the problem of the two peoples that need to be able to live together in peace and security. This opportunity now exists. The annexation was suspended, and we believe it's the moment in which it's important that Palestinians and Israelis restart their dialogue in order to find a political solution in line with what are the Security Council resolutions and the different [inaudible] of the international community in this regard. And so, I believe that, independently of the opinions that might exist about the agreement, it would be very important for Palestinians and Israelis to engage in direct negotiations for peace in the Middle East.

**Question:** Could I ask a quick follow-up? Is the UN doing anything to promote these negotiations as part of the Quartet, for example?

**Secretary-General:** Yes, we've been pushing hard not only to promote direct contact, but also to try to find a format in which the Quartet or a group of countries linked to the Quartet could meet. Until now, we were not able to gather the consensus necessary for that, but we will persist in our efforts. It is very important not to give up on the peace process in the Middle East.

...

**Question:** Mr. Secretary-General, beyond the question of annexation, do you have anything to say about the fact that, for the first time in 26 years, in more than quarter century, there was an agreement by two Arab States to normalize relations with Israel and break a pattern that has lasted for such a long time?

...

**Secretary-General:** Well, first of all, in relation to the agreements, we were the first... or one of the first to welcome the agreement, and I think that international cooperation is an absolutely essential aspect to solve problems. Obviously, the question of the annexation is politically important, because it allows for the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. And I've just seen today that Mr. [Benny] Gantz said that it's important to restart those negotiations, which show that there is an agreement with this perspective.

...

**Question:** Hello. Thanks for your... taking my question, Secretary-General. You mentioned just a little earlier it's very important not to give up on the peace process in the Middle East. It seems the Palestinians seem to have given up on following through on peace agreements, and the UN only seems to encourage that rejection. With that said, don't you think the historic Abrahamic Accord signed yesterday should be seen as a positive way forward to peace in the region? And would you encourage the Palestinian leadership to accept them fully and return to peace talks with Israelis? Thank you.



**Secretary-General:** I do believe it's absolutely essential that Palestinians and Israelis go back to direct negotiations, and I will do everything I can to make sure that we find the format — Quartet or similar format — in which a number of countries can be helpful in making sure that the peace process can move forward. It is absolutely clear for me that this is a problem that need to be solved, and I hope that what was achieved in relation to the... namely, in relation to the suspension, I hope that that will create an opportunity for direct talks between Palestinians and Israelis that I believe are essential to solve the problem.

...

## **IX. SPECIAL COORDINATOR MLADENOV'S BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL, REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 2334 (2016)**

*On 29 September, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle-East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov delivered the following briefing to the Security Council ([S/PV.8762](#)):*

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote this briefing to presenting his fifteenth report on the implementation of resolution [2334](#) (2016), covering the period from 5 June to 20 September of this year.

Before presenting the report, I would like to note the recent agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The Secretary-General welcomes those agreements, which suspended Israeli annexation plans over parts of the occupied West Bank. The Secretary-General hopes that such developments will encourage Palestinian and Israeli leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations towards a two-State solution and create opportunities for regional cooperation. He reiterates that only a two-State solution that realizes the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis can lead to sustainable peace between the two peoples and contribute to broader peace in the region.

I am similarly encouraged by the call to restore hope in the peace process and resume negotiations on the basis of international law and agreed parameters, as made by the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Egypt, France and Germany in Amman.

The recent moves towards strengthening Palestinian unity, as demonstrated by the outcome of the Fatah-Hamas meetings calling for the long-awaited national presidential and legislative elections, are also encouraging. Elections and legitimate democratic institutions are critical to uniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single national authority and vital to upholding the prospect of a negotiated twoState solution.

However, I am concerned by the rising coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infection rates in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. The Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is working with the relevant stakeholders to address the needs in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I welcome the initial response from the donor community to the United Nations COVID-19 efforts, and I urge increased support, particularly as the health emergency is rapidly becoming a socioeconomic crisis. All efforts must be mobilized in order to respond to the pandemic, particularly in Gaza.

Turning to the report, from the outset let me state that developments during the reporting period cannot be divorced from the broader context — Israel’s continued military occupation of the Palestinian territory; the illegal settlement activity and demolitions; the situation in Gaza, with more than a decade of control by Hamas over the Gaza Strip and ensuing rocket fire, militant activity and Israeli closures; unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts; severe challenges to the viability of the Palestinian Authority; and the persistent risk of military escalation. The global pandemic has further increased the needs and vulnerabilities of Palestinians.

Those factors collectively erode the prospects for achieving a viable two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements.

Resolution 2334 (2016), in paragraph 2, calls on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem” and to “fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard”. No steps were taken to that effect during the reporting period.

During this and the previous reporting period, there were no settlement housing plans advanced, approved or tendered in Area C. On 21 June, however, the Jerusalem District Planning Committee advanced plans for a building with 72 housing units in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina.

On 9 June, the High Court of Justice struck down a 2017 law enabling the wide-scale expropriation of private Palestinian land and the retroactive regularization, under Israeli law, of thousands of housing units in settlements and unauthorized outposts. The Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional owing to its violation of the rights of Palestinians to property and equality as a protected population in the occupied West Bank.

On 27 August, the High Court of Justice also ordered the evacuation of approximately 40 structures in the illegal settlement outpost of Mitzpe Kramim, illegal also under Israeli law, and the relocation of its residents. Meanwhile, two new outposts were established in Um Zaituna, between the occupied West Bank settlements of Ma’on and Carmel, and on Mount Eival, north of Nablus.

On several occasions during the reporting period, Israeli authorities removed or destroyed structures in illegal outposts, in some cases leading to violent clashes with the Israeli security forces and settlers. As highlighted in a statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory on 10 September, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities continued across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, reaching the highest demolition rate in the past four years.

Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which remain almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, 250 structures were seized or demolished, resulting in the displacement of 360 Palestinians, including 179 children and 87 women. Of the structures demolished, 181 were in Area C and 69 in East Jerusalem. In 32 cases, Palestinians were forced to demolish their own homes so as not to incur the heavy Israeli demolition fees. Health and water facilities, as well as agricultural structures, were also demolished, affecting the services and livelihoods of up to 2,000 Palestinians.

Resolution 2334 (2016), in paragraph 6, calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction”. Unfortunately, violence continues almost on a daily basis.

In August, Palestinian militants resumed launching incendiary balloons from Gaza towards Israel, sometimes escalating to rockets and mortars. Israel retaliated by striking targets in Gaza and temporarily tightening the closures, until a temporary de-escalation was achieved at the end of the month. Overall, 63 rockets and mortars were fired towards Israel from Gaza, 22 were intercepted by the Iron Dome system and 19 landed in Israel. At least eight Israeli civilians, two of them children, were injured and at least two houses were damaged, while over 400 balloons carrying incendiary devices were launched into Israel, causing hundreds of fires in the vicinity of Gaza.

Israeli security forces launched over 160 missiles and tank shells against Hamas positions in Gaza. Ten Palestinian civilians, including four children and a pregnant woman, were injured, and at least two houses were damaged. Following one strike, an unexploded Israeli missile was found in a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school in the Al-Shati refugee camp.

Meanwhile in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during the reporting period, four Palestinians, including one child, were killed by the Israeli security forces and 40 people injured by live ammunition. One Israeli was killed and 37 were injured by Palestinians, including three children, in stabbings, clashes, rocket attacks, and other incidents.

On 23 June, a 27-year-old Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli security forces while reportedly carrying out a ramming attack at a checkpoint near Jerusalem in which one soldier was injured.

On 9 July, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 34-year-old Palestinian man and wounded a 17-year-old in the West Bank village of Kifl Haris.

Later in July, several Palestinian workers were severely beaten and robbed of their possessions near Mitar Terminal, south of Hebron. The Israeli Justice Ministry subsequently submitted indictments against five border police officers.

In early August, a 23-year-old Palestinian woman was killed by live fire in her home in Jenin during an Israeli security forces operation and the ensuing clash with residents. There are contradictory claims over responsibility for the shooting, and a Palestinian prosecutor is investigating the incident.

On 17 August, a Palestinian man, who was attempting to carry out a stabbing attack against an Israeli border police officer, was shot and killed in the Old City of Jerusalem.

On the same day, Israeli security forces shot and injured a 60-year-old Palestinian man with hearing and speech impairments at the Qalandiya checkpoint when he did not respond to their calls to halt.

Later in August, a 16-year-old Palestinian died, and two others were injured, after being shot in a village west of Ramallah. The Israeli security forces stated that the three were preparing to throw Molotov cocktails and set alight tires to attack passing vehicles.

On 26 August, a Palestinian man from Nablus stabbed and killed an Israeli man in Petach Tikva. The perpetrator was later arrested.

On 2 September, an Israeli police officer and a soldier were injured in an alleged ramming attack south of Nablus. The Palestinian driver was shot and apprehended.

Settler-related violence in the occupied West Bank continued during the reporting period. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 73 attacks against Palestinians by Israeli settlers, with 30 injuries resulting from those incidents. Approximately 100 attacks resulting in some 20 injuries and damage to property by Palestinians against settlers and other Israeli civilians were also reported.

On 14 September, an Israeli court sentenced the convicted killer of a Palestinian family in a 2015 gruesome arson attack in Duma village to three life sentences for murder and 20 years for attempted murder, as well ordering compensation to the family.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement or inflammatory rhetoric. During the reporting period, one senior Fatah official said that anyone who cooperates with Israel “should be shot”, and in its weekly guidance for Friday sermons, the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Religious Affairs used anti-Semitic language in messaging on the recent normalization agreements that “there is nothing that harms Palestine and its holy sites more than making an alliance with the Jews, being connected to them, and relying on them.” Some Israeli officials also made provocative and concerning statements in support of the annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank and rejected the prospect of Palestinian statehood.

One Israeli member of the Knesset and former Minister incited to violence, deprecating a video showing restraint by soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the face of a 15-year-old Palestinian child throwing stones at them. Referring to the manslaughter conviction of a member of the IDF after fatally having shot a Palestinian assailant in Hebron, he said: “I would prefer 1,000 videos of Elor Azaria instead of an embarrassing and dangerous one like this one.”

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. On 3 September, for the first time in nearly a decade, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee held its first meeting together with the heads of all Palestinian factions. Speakers focused on the need to restore unity and reform the PLO. President Abbas reiterated his known position that he is ready to launch negotiations with Israel under United Nations or international auspices, while also calling for popular resistance to confront the annexation threat.

Following an escalation in violence between Hamas and Israel, Qatar mediated a de-escalation arrangement announced on 31 August and provided significant assistance to Gaza, including to support COVID-19 response and to vulnerable families. As a result, Israel allowed the delivery of

fuel, reinstated the fishing zone and reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing for goods, and Hamas agreed to halt incendiary balloons and other attacks.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of coordination between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel in response to the plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank have contributed to worsening the already dire humanitarian, economic and political situation in Gaza and impacted the health and socioeconomic situation in the West Bank. The PA's decision to stop accepting the clearance revenues that Israel collects on its behalf has exacerbated an already concerning fiscal crisis, with an 80 per cent reduction in Palestinian revenues, which has impacted salaries and service provision. It is unclear whether the Government will have sufficient resources to make any future salary payments or carry out its functions in the coming months.

In Gaza, COVID-19-related restrictions halted the crossing of workers and traders into Israel and prevented revenue transfers to Gaza's exporters. The absence of coordination also delayed critical infrastructure projects, exacerbating the high unemployment rate in the Strip, which is nearly 50 per cent.

In response, the United Nations has engaged with all sides to ensure the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance. Agreements were reached with the PA to enable the coordination of humanitarian deliveries under United Nations auspices and with Israel to streamline its administrative procedures. In early September, the Palestinian Authority also re-engaged in its support to donor-funded projects in Gaza. Still, the lack of coordination has significantly compounded the challenge of confronting the rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. During the reporting period, three patients, including two children, who needed urgent medical treatment outside Gaza died because of related delays. On 6 September, however, the United Nations brokered arrangements to enable patient transfers from Gaza with the support of the World Health Organization.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces a \$200 million financial shortfall in its 2020 core programme budget and is seeking an additional \$31 million to cover its 2020 emergency appeal for critical humanitarian needs in Gaza. UNRWA's extended COVID-19 response plan for \$94.6 million to cover needs through the end of the year is only 5 per cent funded.

Concerning arrests have also taken place. On 19 July, Israeli police arrested and detained the PA Governor of Jerusalem. On 9 September, the Internal Security Force (ISF) further notified the Governor of an order restricting his movement. Later, on 21 September, the Palestinian Security Forces arrested seven members of the Fatah Democratic Reform Bloc.

In another negative development, the media reported that Israel's Security Cabinet passed a motion on 2 September to withhold the bodies of Palestinians killed in armed attacks, or alleged armed attacks, that caused injury or death to Israelis, expanding its existing policy to withhold the bodies of Palestinians whom Israel identifies as known militants.

In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called upon all States

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

No such steps were known to have been taken during the reporting period.

Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon all parties to continue, inter alia, “to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations”.

The agreements between Israel and Bahrain and between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which were formalized in a signing ceremony at the White House on 15 September, highlight the criticality of achieving a just, comprehensive and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets the legitimate needs and aspirations of both peoples.

On 27 August and earlier today, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met virtually to discuss these latest developments and agreed to remain engaged on the matter and chart a way forward.

On 9 September, the League of Arab States held a ministerial meeting. In the final statement, participants reinforced the commitment of all Arab League States to ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and stated that the Arab Peace Initiative remains the basis for achieving a lasting, just and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.

I would like to share some broad observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

First, the resurgence of COVID-19 is having a devastating effect on the ground. The United Nations and its partners will continue to support the Palestinians in responding to the pandemic, including by addressing critical gaps in medical supplies and equipment. It is important to focus particularly on Gaza, given the unique situation and extreme vulnerability of the population. Any increased responsibilities taken on by the United Nations should be limited, time-bound and not replace the responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority or the Government of Israel. I urge the parties to find a path forward to address this urgent health crisis. I also urge support for UNRWA as well as for the inter-agency COVID-19 plan and the United Nations development response plan in support of the efforts of the Palestinian Government.

Second, we must also remain focused on addressing the steadily eroding situation on the ground. While over the past reporting periods we have seen limited settlement advancement, I remain concerned by plans for settlement construction in the E1 area and other sensitive locations in the occupied West Bank, which are pending approval by the Israeli authorities. As clearly set out in resolution 2334 (2016), the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

Third, I am deeply concerned by the serious spike in demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I urge Israel to cease this policy immediately, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Fourth, Israel’s suspension of plans to annex parts of the West Bank removed a critical threat that had the potential to upend peace and regional stability. Annexation would have constituted a most serious violation of international law and dealt a devastating blow to the prospect of the two-State solution. The threat, however, to the viability of the two-State solution posed by continued

settlement expansion and demolitions remains. In that regard, I am concerned by recent discussions in the Knesset that demonstrate the intensifying pressure by the Government on Palestinians living in Area C.

Fifth, given the severe economic and health crisis faced by the Palestinian people, I take this opportunity to call on the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to urgently re-engage and strengthen efforts to advance the goal of a negotiated two-State solution. This financial crisis can and must end. Both sides should re-examine the nature of their economic relationship and improve it to the benefit of both peoples.

Sixth, daily violence continues to fuel mistrust and drives us further from a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Settler-related violence continues, and I urge Israel, as the occupying Power, to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian population and to hold the perpetrators of the attacks accountable. I reiterate that the Israeli security forces must exercise maximum restraint and should use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and also investigate all incidents of the possible excessive use of force swiftly, thoroughly and independently.

Seventh, I also emphasize that the indiscriminate launching of rockets and incendiary devices towards Israeli population centres violates international law, and I call on all Palestinian militants in Gaza to halt such attacks. Likewise, children and schools should never be the target of violence by any party; children should not be exposed to violence at all.

Eighth, I also welcome the 13 August understandings, which have de-escalated tensions in and around Gaza and appreciate Qatar's continued generous support to the Gaza population. I nevertheless remain seriously concerned about the fragile calm and the unacceptable suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. The risk of another major escalation has not been eliminated. No amount of humanitarian or economic support alone will overcome Gaza's challenges. The fundamental problems are political. They require the necessary leadership to reunite Gaza and the West Bank under a single democratic, national leadership as well as to lift Israeli closures in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Ninth, I welcome the recent meeting of the PLO Executive Committee and the heads of Palestinian factions as well as the subsequent efforts made by the leadership to strengthen Palestinian unity. It is critical that the important Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts also continue. The United Nations firmly supports all such efforts, and I call upon all Palestinian factions to build on this momentum to reunite Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic national Government and advance towards general elections, which are critical for restoring belief in the democratic Palestinian leadership and institutions. Gaza must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution.

I am concerned about reports by Palestinian rights groups of arrests by Palestinian security forces in Gaza and the West Bank based on political affiliation, without clear charges or accusations. Such politically motivated arrests should stop, and the rule of law should prevail.

I would like to reiterate that the fate of two Israeli civilians and the remains of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas in Gaza remains an important humanitarian concern. I call upon Hamas to provide full information on them, as required by international humanitarian law.

I also remain concerned about Israel's practice of holding the bodies of killed Palestinians and about reports of a recent expansion of that policy. I call for the return of the withheld bodies, in line with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, we are again at a pivotal moment in the search for peace as a convergence of destabilizing factors threatens to pull Israelis and Palestinians further towards a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. I remain committed to supporting both sides to resolve the conflict and end the occupation, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State — within secure and recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for the members of the Middle East Quartet, key Arab partners and the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to urgently re-engage and strengthen efforts to advance the goal of a negotiated two-State solution before it is too late.

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