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

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

Identical letters dated 15 December 2020 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Despite our repeated appeals for international action to deter Israel from its criminal behaviour towards the Palestinian people, the lack of serious efforts to hold the occupying Power accountable and ensure protection, as prescribed by international humanitarian law, has left the Palestinian people even more vulnerable to the brutality of this occupation.

The absence of accountability has without a doubt emboldened Israel's crimes throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. While such abuse of the law and of human rights should be high on the Security Council's agenda, its continued silence and inaction has regrettably allowed these violations to go unchecked and impaired the Council's credibility and ability to uphold its Charter-mandated responsibilities, not only towards the Palestine question, but also on other critical matters on its agenda, to the detriment of the international system as a whole.

As part of its relentless settlement colonization scheme, Israel has continued to confiscate Palestinian land, demolish Palestinian homes and properties, displace Palestinian civilians and expand its settlements, all in grave breach of international law and United Nations resolutions. Even in just the one week since my last letter to you, the occupation has undertaken countless more illegal actions in this regard.

The occupying Power has announced that it plans to seize large tracts of land near the Palestinian city of Nablus for the expansion of its illegal "Yitzhar" settlement, whose settler population are notoriously known for incitement and violence. These illegal plans involve the expropriation of privately-owned and agricultural land from the villages of Asira al-Qibliya, Burin and Madama, gravely impacting the lives and livelihoods of numerous Palestinian families, as Israel aims to expand this illegal settlement through the construction of new settler-only roads, outposts, military zones and other colonial schemes used to entrench the occupation and advance its annexation attempts.



We must reiterate: the proliferation of illegal settlements, including, in particular, in areas in and around occupied East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus and Al-Khalil (Hebron), are severely fragmenting the territory of Occupied Palestine, consolidating the illegal annexation of Jerusalem and destroying the viability of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders. The continued construction of tunnels, overpasses and highways to connect these illegal settlements is cutting through and around Palestinian towns, setting the stage for an explosive settlement growth accompanied by the illegal transfer of more Israeli settlers and with this the pervasive violence that has traumatized millions of Palestinians.

This is all being carried out in grave breach of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and countless United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in which the Council explicitly demanded a halt to all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Moreover, we recall that the Council, inter alia, unequivocally:

- Underlined “that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations”.
- Called upon States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967”.

To facilitate this illegal colonization of our land, Israel has heavily relied on the forced transfer of the Palestinian population in order to replace them with Israeli settlers. This is blatant ethnic cleansing. In addition to the seizure of land, the demolition of Palestinian homes continues to be the crime of choice for enacting these unlawful and destructive schemes.

On 8 December, accompanied by a heavy military presence and bulldozers, Israeli occupation forces demolished several Palestinian homes in Shalal al-Auja, displacing more than 40 residents. They sealed off all entrances to the town before attacking residents who desperately attempted to save their homes. Shalal al-Auja has been relentlessly targeted by the occupation, with Palestinian residents routinely prevented from accessing their natural resources, particularly the spring and nearby water wells, which are exclusively accessed by Israeli settlers from nearby illegal settlements. Such inhumane policies clearly aim to deprive the Palestinian population and restrict their development, forcing them to pay for overpriced water supplies from the occupying Power’s companies, which directly supply illegal settlements with water exploited from Palestinian land.

Occupied East Jerusalem also continues to be heavily targeted by Israeli demolition and eviction practices. On 3 and 23 November, Israeli courts ruled to uphold the eviction of eight Palestinian families in the Batan al-Hawa neighbourhood of Silwan, affecting 45 people, including children, and of the Sabbagh family in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, impacting 32 people, including six children. If this illegal, inhumane plan is not stopped, all of these families will be dispossessed of their homes and forcibly transferred.

We note in this regard the important statement issued by European Union missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah on 11 December regarding the imminent eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, particularly in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, where entire communities of close to 200 families are now at risk of losing their homes. The European Union statement once again underscored the illegality of Israel’s policies and stressed its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law, and called on the Israeli authorities to reverse the rulings on the intended evictions.

Yet, regrettably, despite repeated warnings about Israel's intensification of land appropriation, home demolition and eviction policies and demands for cessation, little has been done in response to the continuation of these crimes. This has only emboldened the occupying Power to persist with its colonization of the Palestinian land and forced transfer of the Palestinian people. The time for action for accountability is now if we are ever to reverse these negative and destructive trends on the ground.

With utter disregard for the lockdown measures declared in the occupied West Bank due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Israeli occupying forces have also intensified assaults and attacks on civilians through arrest campaigns and nightly raids. In the week since my last letter, dozens more Palestinian civilians, including children, have been arrested, savagely interrogated, detained and imprisoned without charge. On 9 December, Israeli occupation forces conducted multiple military raids and detained 18 Palestinians from various parts of the occupied West Bank, among them minors. In the month of November alone, Israeli forces detained 413 Palestinians during raids in the occupied territories, including 49 minors under the age of 18 and seven women.

Palestinian children and youth continue to be especially targeted in such military raids. On 29 November, Mohammed Moqbel, 16 years of age, was detained by Israeli soldiers during an incursion into Arroub refugee camp, north of Al-Khalil (Hebron). Mohammed suffered a broken jaw when an Israeli soldier struck him in the face with a rifle and was physically assaulted by three other soldiers after he was already in custody. Instead of being provided with medical care, Mohammed was brought before interrogators, who verbally assaulted him, and was left outside in the cold, bound and blindfolded, for six hours. He was later transferred to a hospital, where his hands and feet were shackled to a bed. Mohammed's unwarranted detention was extended by an Israeli military judge on 1 December.

As found by Defense for Children International – Palestine, "Israeli forces know that systemic impunity will allow them to continue to subject unnecessary violence against Palestinian children without ever being held accountable. Physical violence and ill-treatment of Palestinian child detainees is widespread and institutionalized in the Israeli military detention system."

Turning to the situation in the Gaza Strip, we must again sound the alarm about the deplorable humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions there due to Israel's 13-year blockade that has inflicted such severe deprivation, hunger and misery on its 2 million inhabitants. Farmlands continue to be targeted by occupation forces, with repeated incursions in recent weeks. On 9 December, Israeli military tanks and bulldozers advanced to the east of Juhor ad-Dik, near Gaza City, and razed lands and set up earth mounds for military posts located beyond Israeli territory and several hundred metres into Gaza, leading to intermittent fire by the occupation forces.

Despite Israel's claims of its so-called "disengaging" from Gaza, its illegal air, sea and land blockade blatantly contradicts such claims and underscores its role and responsibilities as an occupying Power. The irony in Israel's attempts to create alternative interpretations over its brutal blockade on Gaza is to cover its colonial intentions in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

More than 53 years of ruthless military occupation has proven that Israel has no regard for international law, and that statements alone will not compel its respect for the law and will not avert the looming destruction of the two-State solution and peace prospects. Serious deterrent action is required to appropriately reflect the global and principled commitment to the standing and universal application of international law. This must start with accountability measures.

The Security Council must demand a halt to the occupation's violations in order to protect civilian lives, civilian properties and the chances for a just peace. Continued inaction will only undermine the foundations of international law and bolster agendas that seek to blur the lines between what is legal and illegal, and what is moral and immoral. This must be countered with the utmost urgency.

The implementation of Security Council resolutions must remain at the forefront of global efforts to promote accountability and justice. The international community is at a critical moment with so much at stake, and the Palestinian people look to it to give true meaning to the law and to the stated commitment to human rights and equality for all, without which conflict will never end and peace and security will remain elusive. It is time now to come together to bring an end to the longest military occupation in modern history.

This letter is in follow-up to our 698 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 7 December 2020 (A/ES-10/844-S/2020/1175) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

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

(Signed) Riyad **Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer
