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

**Security Council**  
**Seventy-sixth year**

## **Identical letters dated 16 February 2021 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**

The critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to worsen owing to the escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people.

The month of January 2021 witnessed grave Israeli violations of international law, and February regrettably followed the same trajectory of unabated and systematic colonization and human rights abuses, entrenching the occupation and further damaging the prospects for a just solution. As illegal settlement and annexation activities escalate, so do the oppression and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, as at least 456 Palestinians, including at least 93 children and 8 women, were arrested and detained in January alone.

The number of home demolitions has also continued to rise. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that 2020 witnessed the highest number of demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures by Israeli occupation forces since the documentation of this inhumane practice began. Considering the levels of demolition and dispossession in January, it is clear that Israel is insistent on continuing on its path of impunity, portending a new violations record in 2021. Since the start of 2021, Israeli occupation forces have already demolished, seized or forced Palestinians to demolish at least 178 structures, displacing over 259 people, including at least 140 children.

As highlighted in previous letters, in two major demolition campaigns, on 1 and 3 February, Israeli occupation forces demolished over 45 structures in Khirbat Humsah (also known as Humsah al-Buqay'ah) in the Jordan Valley, repeatedly displacing and rendering homeless the 60 people, including 35 children, that comprise the nine families in that part of the community, who are now threatened with the risk of forcible transfers. This vulnerable Bedouin community has now been subject to four mass demolitions by Israeli occupation forces, including the destruction of



homes, livestock shelters and water facilities, many of which had been funded by the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Despite Israeli movement restrictions, the Palestinian Government and international organizations mobilized to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the displaced families. However, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council, Israeli occupation forces have confiscated a significant proportion of the assistance, including tents, leaving the displaced families to the mercy of the harsh elements of winter and violating innumerable human rights, including the right to education, with over 50 schools indiscriminately targeted with demolition orders. We refer in this regard to the joint statement of 5 February 2021 by United Nations agencies (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund), in which the international community's attention is drawn to the Israeli demolition campaign against Humsah al-Buqay'ah and such actions by the occupying Power are deemed to constitute direct breaches of international law.

The impact of these illegal and immoral actions on children is especially severe. According to documentation by Save the Children, in 2020 over 840 structures were demolished by the occupation, displacing more than 500 children, leaving them and their families homeless, devastating their communities and disrupting every aspect of their lives. As stressed by Jason Lee, Save the Children's country director: "Children are paying the highest price. Tearing down a house, a school or other vital infrastructure, especially during a pandemic, destroys their right to an education, to have a home. It targets their future, their health, their safety and well-being."

At the same time as uprooting and traumatizing our people, Israel also continues to raze and confiscate Palestinian land and uproot trees, stealing Palestinian property and destroying livelihoods. In the period between 19 January and 1 February 2021, Israeli occupation forces uprooted thousands of trees near the city of Tubas that had been planted eight years ago as part of a project supervised by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture. In a separate assault, Israeli forces bulldozed nearly 1,000 trees in Bethlehem. Both incidents took place on the grounds that the land had been declared "State land", which is a baseless claim used to justify Israel's annexationist intentions.

Israel's demolition campaign is designed to uproot Palestinians from their land through State-sponsored dispossession. The objective is clear: maximize territory, minus the presence of Palestinians (i.e. ethnic cleansing). The methodical implementation of this plan has been especially intense in and around areas critical to the realization of the two-State solution and the preservation of the contiguity of the State of Palestine, two concepts that the occupying Power seeks to destroy.

Although the international community has explicitly called for the cessation of home demolitions, forced evictions, land confiscation and all settlement activities, as reflected in relevant United Nations resolutions, and while Governments, parliamentarians, human rights groups and other international organizations have also called for an end to these illegal actions, Israel continues to violate international law with absolute impunity. The consequences for the Palestinian people have been dire and the prospects for a just peace have been suffocated.

As of today, hundreds of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem are in danger of being dispossessed of their homes and properties following baseless legal battles waged by settler organizations closely linked to the Israeli Government. Adding to the misery of the vulnerable families, who were living in Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan long before the establishment of Israel and the start of the occupation, Israeli courts, where no justice can be found, actually aim to hand over their homes and properties to settlers.

Given the urgency of the matter, over 80 British parliamentarians recently sent a letter to their Foreign Secretary, Mr. Raab, writing that Israel's looming dispossession of Palestinian families in Jerusalem must be prevented, and that such dispossession and forcible transfers are a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Moreover, the parliamentarians called for the necessary legal and political measures to address Israel's mass dispossession of the Palestinian people and its settlement campaign. They stressed that: "All measures should be considered, including reducing diplomatic engagement and banning trade in settlement products in full conformity with international law obligations in order to challenge the settler economy that profits from the occupation."

Similarly, humanitarian organizations have raised concerns and issued warnings over Israel's dispossession campaign against the Palestinian people. On 9 February, the Norwegian Refugee Council underscored the urgency of the matter, warning that the international community "has once again witnessed attacks on some of the poorest families on occupied Palestinian land. Empty words of 'concern' are not enough for these families, who find themselves homeless and deprived of the most basic needs. The international community, including European Governments, must do more to stop forced displacement and demand that Israel provide reparations to Palestinian victims."

Regrettably, the failure to hold Israel accountable thus far has greatly emboldened the perpetrators of these crimes, including acts of violence, destruction and terror by Israeli settlers throughout Occupied Palestine. Under the protection of Israeli soldiers, extremist settlers continue to kill, assault and abduct Palestinian civilians and to damage homes, uproot trees, desecrate houses of worship and routinely incite, harass and intimidate the Palestinian population, including children.

On 5 February, Israeli settlers shot and killed a Palestinian man in Ras Karkar, north of Ramallah. Khaled Nofal, 34, was killed by settlers near the illegal outpost of "Sde Efraim", which was erected on privately owned Palestinian land seized for settlement expansion. Israeli occupation forces prevented Palestinian medics from accessing the site and have yet to bring the perpetrators to justice.

On 10 February, an Israeli settler from the infamous settlement of "Ariel" ran over a Palestinian man near Salfit, killing him instantly. On 12 February, another car attack by a settler took place near Tubas, killing one Palestinian and injuring two others. While on a hike, Bilal Bawatneh, 52, was killed instantly as the criminal settler escaped using settler-only roads leading to nearby settlements. Had the perpetrators been Palestinian, it is well known that Israeli forces would have demolished their families' homes and restricted movement across the West Bank, imposing collective punishment on the entire civilian population in order to punish the perpetrator and in complete disregard for international law.

Last week, video footage also emerged showing an Israeli settler carrying out an attack against the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, causing damage to the church property. A statement by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem warned that "Israeli extremists' attacks against churches and mosques in Jerusalem are alarmingly on the rise, and the failure of Israeli official authorities to deal with them and their tolerance towards such terrorist acts will definitely lead to more fuelling of the conflict in the Holy City, and will keep it further away from achieving peace and stability".

On 10 February, the mayor of Al-Khalil (Hebron), Taysir Abu Senineh, received numerous death threats from the leader of the so-called "Qiryat Arba" settlement, along with threats from Israeli parliamentarian, Moshe Abutbul. Both the settler leader and the politician have intensified their collaborative campaign of anti-Palestinian incitement aimed at intimidating the population and consolidating

Israel's "eternal occupation" of Al-Khalil, including in the southern hills of the area where Palestinian communities are under grave threat of displacement, including in Masafer Yatta.

Even in this time of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Israeli attacks and military raids have escalated. During an overnight raid on 10 February, Israeli occupation forces launched multiple incursions across the occupied West Bank and detained over 30 Palestinians, most of them children, adding to the thousands of Palestinian civilians being illegally held captive by the occupation.

It is beyond disturbing to imagine the experience and trauma endured by the Palestinian children as they were detained, blindfolded and taken away from their parents and homes in the middle of the night, only to be victims of Israel's systematic practices of arbitrary detention and torture. We reiterate the call for the immediate release of all Palestinian children being held by the occupying Power and for Israel's respect for its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Turning to the situation in the Gaza Strip, we again sound the alarm about the deplorable humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions there on account of the illegal Israeli blockade that has caused such severe deprivation, hunger and misery to its 2 million inhabitants, the majority of whom are Palestine refugees, who continue to bear the hardships of the original dispossession and displacement inflicted on them by Israel. Today, in yet another inhumane act, the occupying Power blocked the entry to Gaza of 2,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines intended for front-line health workers, including personnel in intensive care units treating patients with the virus. This constitutes yet another grave breach of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israeli occupation forces continue to infiltrate Gaza's shores and agricultural lands with military boats and earth-moving machinery, indiscriminately attacking civilians and causing significant damage to Gaza's already devastated economy and infrastructure. Just two days ago, occupation forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers working on their land near the border, depriving them of their source of sustenance and livelihood. This was preceded by yet another attack on Palestinian fishermen, who were fired at with live ammunition and water cannons on 7 February.

The International Criminal Court's recent decision affirming jurisdiction in Palestine brings hope that long-overdue accountability and justice are possible. The deterrent capacity of the Court is also undoubted, as the perpetrators of war crimes against the Palestinian people have been put on notice. Despite Israel's threats and false accusations of antisemitism against the International Criminal Court, the Court has recognized the legitimacy and necessity of impartially investigating the situation in Palestine for the cause of justice, which is a central element of the realization of peace.

Since the onset of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory in 1967, Israel has yet to bear an ounce of accountability for decades of impunity and oppression. The result has been devastating for the Palestinian people and for the goal of a just and lasting peace and security between Palestine and Israel, making the applicability of international law, including United Nations resolutions, more imperative than ever. The Security Council, in particular, must uphold its duty under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. This too surely requires preventive measures, including accountability measures. We therefore again appeal to the Council to take action to uphold the law and implement its resolutions on the Palestine question. The Council must overcome its paralysis and act forthwith to end the Israeli occupation in all its manifestations,

including the colonial settlement regime, and to support the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

In closing, we recall that, when asked about the Israeli occupation in late 2016, the then Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, stated: “The lack of any significant movement towards a political resolution and ongoing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law are exacerbated by the lack of accountability for previous violations ... Tackling impunity must be the highest priority.” Nearly five years later, the occupation is becoming more entrenched by the minute, while accountability remains absent. We must seize this opportunity to prevent the passing of yet another year of inaction and raging impunity at the expense of more Palestinian suffering and yet another lost generation.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 704 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 4 February 2021 (A/ES-10/849-S/2021/108) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the 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