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**General Assembly**  
**Tenth emergency special session**  
Agenda item 5

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

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

## **Identical letters dated 4 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 situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate due to the escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power.

Every day, Israel proves that it has not abandoned its annexation plans. In every action, annexation is the driving force and ultimate goal. This is blatantly apparent in the illegal plans for the so-called “Giv’at Hamatos” settlement, yet another instalment in Israel’s creeping annexation scheme, implemented across the nearly 54 years of this illegal occupation, through which it has swallowed up more and more Palestinian land, step by step, artificially dividing and fragmenting our land.

Israel’s drive for colonial settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, around the Mar Elias Monastery and between Beit Safafa and Bethlehem, referred to by Israel as “Har Homa” and “Giv’at Hamatos”, in addition to the ongoing expansion of settlement infrastructure, including Jewish-only bypass roads, which threatens the Cremisan Valley and Al Slayeb in Beit Jala, referred to by the occupying Power as “Gilo”, deprive Palestine of some of its most important lands and natural resources. It is part of the ongoing process of annexation aimed at surrounding Palestinian cities, towns and villages with a ring of settlements and at severing the natural connection and contiguity between these areas and, in particular, between the sister cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

As cautioned by the Mayor of Bethlehem, Anton Salman: “Such continued colonial settlement expansion does not only separate the geography between the holy cities, it also contributes to the sabotage of our Palestinian practices and traditions, whether religious or cultural, inherited from our ancestors.” The impact is real, far-reaching and dangerous.

The illegal “Giv’at Hamatos” settlement will destroy the Palestinian State’s contiguity and deal a devastating blow to the two-State solution. Ask the residents of Beit Safafa and Sharafat, who have witnessed widespread dispossession and



displacement owing to Israel's frenzied colonization and have lost faith in the two-State solution and the possibility of peace. Once "Giv'at Hamatos" is completed, towns like Beit Safafa and Sharafat will be completely isolated and surrounded by the Wall and illegal settlements, frighteningly resembling the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa. This is the reality in which they, like millions of Palestinians under this illegal occupation, are living.

Back in 1997, we urged the Security Council to take action to stop the illegal settlement of Jabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa). That was met with broad international condemnation of Israel's plans and led to the convening by the General Assembly of its tenth emergency special session. However, no decisive action was taken to stop the occupying Power from pushing us to the brink, where we are today. Will the international community allow Israel to carry on with these colonial plans between Bethlehem and Jerusalem to make a new "Jabal Abu Ghneim", without consequences, or will it act to uphold the law and salvage peace prospects?

It is no secret why such impunity prevails. Israel persists with this illegal colonization and annexation campaign because it is cost-free and because it has never been held responsible for its flagrant violations of international law and United Nations resolutions. This is epitomized by the events of recent weeks. Even after Israel revealed plans for the construction of thousands more settlement units in "Giv'at Hamatos" and other settlements across the West Bank, the international community has been unable to move beyond condemnation and appeals for cessation, to concrete action to hold the occupying Power accountable and compel a halt to these crimes.

We reiterate: whether annexation is implemented partially or totally, de facto or de jure, the international community is obliged to take serious and tangible action, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

The false Israeli narrative that these settlements are a part of Israel must be firmly rejected. We recall Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), by which the Council not only demanded that Israel cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, but also directly called upon States "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967".

The lack of respect for that resolution and the absence of accountability has led to more Israeli colonization and annexation measures in our land, resulting in further dispossession, displacement and other violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. Even in this time of pandemic, the Israeli occupation has failed to demonstrate an ounce of humanity, as Palestinian homes, structures and properties continue to be demolished.

Yesterday, Israeli occupying forces demolished structures in Khirbet Humsa in the northern Jordan Valley for the second time in 48 hours and for the third time in less than three months. Thirteen residential structures, home to 11 Palestinian families consisting of 74 people, 41 of whom are children, and five structures and tents for livestock were dismantled and confiscated and the families were forced to relocate to another area. This forced transfer, a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, amounts to yet another war crime by Israel against the Palestinian people.

This was preceded on 24 January by the demolition of agricultural structures, including water wells, in the village of Al Khader, south of Bethlehem, and, on 26 January, by the issuance of a demolition order against a medical clinic in Khirbat Zanutah, south of Al-Khalil (Hebron), again while the pandemic is raging. The

following day, Israeli occupation forces stormed Masafer Yatta, south of Al-Khalil, demolishing a mosque. That demolition was carried out less than two weeks after our previous letter, in which we warned about the occupation's intentions to destroy many buildings in Masafer Yatta, including the mosque and a school funded by the European Union. On 2 February, clearly not coincidentally, the area of Masafer Yatta was declared by Israel as a "firing zone" for a large-scale military training manoeuvre, which forced the residents from their homes and exposed their plans to seize the area.

Similarly, on 27 January, Israeli occupation forces once again stormed Khan al-Ahmar, which has routinely been targeted over the years by the Israeli military and faces imminent destruction to clear the way for the expansion of the illegal settlements of "Ma'ale Adumim" and "Kfar Adumim". According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Khan al-Ahmar is "one of the 46 Bedouin communities in the central West Bank that the United Nations views as at risk of forcible transfer, including due to a coercive environment generated by Israeli practices and policies, including plans to move the communities from their current locations".

All of this has been accompanied by constant settler rampages. Under the protection of Israeli soldiers and with the backing of the Israeli government, Israeli settlers, including extremist militias, enjoy almost absolute impunity. Since our previous letter, settlers have caused damage to Palestinian homes and vehicles, uprooted hundreds more trees, deprived Palestinians of their livelihoods and inflicted daily harassment, intimidation and violence on Palestinian civilians, including children, as well as attempting the kidnapping of an 11-year-old Palestinian girl, that was fortunately averted.

The fact is that the violence and criminality of the Israeli settlers is part and parcel of the illegal settlement drive. The settlers and the government work hand in glove, two sides of the same operation, aimed at colonizing and annexing our land. As the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has pointed out: "Israel benefits from the repercussions, as settler violence has gradually dispossessed Palestinians of more and more areas in the West Bank, paving the way for a state takeover of land and resources." This is the engine for what B'Tselem has rightly identified as Israel's aim of "geographically and demographically engineering space" to ensure its control and "Jewish supremacy" in all of the land.

This policy has clearly also fuelled continued oppression of the occupied population, with total disregard for Palestinian lives. Young Palestinian males continue to be disproportionately affected. On 26 January, Atallah Mohammad Rayan, 17, was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers near Salfit, after occupation forces claimed he was carrying a knife. Eyewitnesses reported that Israeli soldiers made no attempt to provide first aid and that the child was left to bleed, until he succumbed to his wounds. On 31 January, a young Palestinian man was shot dead by Israeli occupation forces south of Bethlehem. Eyewitnesses also reported that the young man was left to die as occupation forces prevented him from receiving emergency aid following the incident.

Here we must again draw urgent attention to the plight of Palestinian children being held captive in Israeli jails along with thousands of other Palestinians. We highlight today the case of Amal Nakhleh, a 17-year-old boy, who was sentenced by an Israeli military court to six months of administrative detention without charge or a trial. The European Union and several human rights organizations have called for the release of Amal, who suffers from myasthenia gravis, a rare chronic autoimmune disease that causes muscle weakness, including in the muscles used for breathing and swallowing. We reiterate the call for his immediate release and for that 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.

It is impossible in one letter to convey how pervasive, insidious and destructive this illegal occupation's policies and practices are to our people, how severe the impact is on every aspect of life, sparing no one. Whether imposing its illegal colonization and annexation plans or its illegal and immoral blockade of the Gaza Strip, Israel perpetrates countless violations, causing widespread Palestinian suffering and destroying the viability of the two-State solution and the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace and security. The absence of accountability undoubtedly encourages these crimes, as Israel continues to evade the consequences, distracting the international community with its lip service to peace, while actually making it impossible to realize. Only accountability can alter this dismal equation. We thus appeal today, as we have for years, for tangible international action, including from the Security Council, to uphold the rule of law, protect civilians and salvage the prospects for a just, lasting and peaceful solution, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, before it is too late.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 703 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 22 January 2021 ([A/ES-10/848-S/2021/74](#)) 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