



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

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

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I. ICC PROSECUTOR ANNOUNCES INVESTIGATION OF THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE

On 3 March, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Fatou Bensouda issued the following [statement](#).

Today, I confirm the initiation by the Office of the Prosecutor (“Office”) of the International Criminal Court (“ICC” or the “Court”) of an investigation respecting the Situation in Palestine. The investigation will cover crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court that are alleged to have been committed in the Situation since 13 June 2014, the date to which reference is made in the Referral of the Situation to my Office.

How the Office will set priorities concerning the investigation will be determined in due time, in light of the operational challenges we confront from the pandemic, the limited resources we have available to us, and our current heavy workload. Such challenges, however, as daunting and complex as they are, cannot divert us from ultimately discharging the responsibilities that the Rome Statute places upon the Office.

Under the Rome Statute, where a State Party has referred a situation to the Office of the Prosecutor and it is determined that a reasonable basis exists to commence an investigation, the Office is obliged to act. As a first step, the Office is required to notify all States Parties and those States which would normally exercise jurisdiction over the crimes concerned about its investigation. This permits any such State to request the Office to defer to the State’s relevant investigation of its own nationals or others within its jurisdiction in relation to Rome Statute crimes referred to in the notification (subject to possible Pre-Trial Chamber review).

Any investigation undertaken by the Office will be conducted independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favour. The Rome Statute obliges the Office, in order to establish the truth, to extend its investigation to cover all facts and evidence relevant to an assessment of whether there is individual criminal responsibility under the Statute and, in doing so, to investigate incriminating and exonerating circumstances equally.

The decision to open an investigation followed a painstaking preliminary examination undertaken by my Office that lasted close to five years. During that period, and in accordance with our normal practice, the Office engaged with a wide array of stakeholders, including in regular and productive meetings with representatives of the Governments of Palestine and Israel, respectively.

On the basis of our deliberations, we knew that one issue we would need to have resolved related to the territorial scope of the Court’s jurisdiction in the situation in Palestine. For this reason, we took, as a responsible prosecuting Office, the preliminary step of seeking a ruling on the question, because it was important for us to obtain clarity on it at the outset, so as to chart the course of any future investigation on a sound and judicially tested foundation.

On 20 December 2019, therefore, aware of the complex and novel issues arising in this Situation, I announced that I would be making a request to the Judges of Pre-Trial Chamber I (“Chamber”) for a ruling to clarify the territorial scope of the Court’s jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine. In our request, dated 22 January 2020, the Office set out its legal position, but

encouraged the Chamber to hear views and arguments from all stakeholders before deciding the specific jurisdictional question before it. The Chamber did so, hearing all points of view.

On 5 February 2021, the Chamber decided, by a majority, that the Court may exercise its criminal jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine, and that the territorial scope of this jurisdiction extends to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In its majority ruling, the Chamber stressed that it was not determining whether Palestine fulfilled the requirements of statehood under public international law, or adjudicating a border dispute, or prejudging the question of any future borders; it was solely determining the scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction for the purposes of the Rome Statute, as requested. Such matters, which the Chamber did not decide, and on which my Office took no position, remain to be determined in bilateral discussions between Israeli and Palestinian authorities in the context of a negotiated agreement.

Having assessed submissions from states, international organisations and other stakeholders, the Chamber was otherwise unanimous in its view that Palestine is a State Party to the Rome Statute. The majority also ruled that Palestine's referral of the Situation obliged the Office to open an investigation, the Office having determined that there existed a reasonable basis to do so in accordance with the Rome Statute criteria.

Given the reaction, both positive and negative, which has greeted the Chamber's ruling, some measure of reason and balance should be restored to the discussion. In their ruling, the judges entered no findings on the alleged crimes the Office identified, they only held that we have competence to investigate them. Even on some questions of jurisdiction, the majority of the Chamber chose to defer to later proceedings its consideration of any further arguments that might be raised.

Investigations take time and they must be grounded objectively in facts and law. In discharging its responsibilities, my Office will take the same principled, non-partisan, approach that it has adopted in all situations over which its jurisdiction is seized. We have no agenda other than to meet our statutory duties under the Rome Statute with professional integrity. I recall here, by way of an example, the allegations made about the conduct of the Israeli Defence Forces in the case of the *Mavi Marmara*, where, as Prosecutor, I declined to commence an investigation on the basis that there was not a reasonable basis to proceed following our clinical assessment of the Rome Statute criteria.

In the current Situation, however, there is a reasonable basis to proceed and there are admissible potential cases. Our assessment will remain ongoing in the context of the investigation to allow for a continuing assessment of actions being taken at the domestic level in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

To both Palestinian and Israeli victims and affected communities, we urge patience. The ICC is not a panacea, but only seeks to discharge the responsibility that the international community has entrusted to it, which is to promote accountability for Rome Statute crimes, regardless of the perpetrator, in an effort to deter such crimes. In meeting this responsibility, the Office focuses its attention on the most notorious alleged offenders or those alleged to be the most responsible for the commission of the crimes.

In the end, our central concern must be for the victims of crimes, both Palestinian and Israeli, arising from the long cycle of violence and insecurity that has caused deep suffering and despair on all sides. The Office is aware of the wider concern, respecting this Situation, for international peace and security. Through the creation of the ICC, States Parties recognised that atrocity crimes are “a threat to peace, security and wellbeing of the world”, and resolved “to guarantee lasting respect for and the enforcement of international justice.” The pursuit of peace and justice should be seen as mutually reinforcing imperatives.

In carrying out our work, we count on the support and cooperation of the parties, as well as all States Parties to the Rome Statute. My Office welcomes the opportunity to engage with both the Government of Palestine and the Government of Israel, to determine how justice may best be served within a framework of complementary domestic and international action. In this way, we can hope to achieve some measure of accountability and justice for the benefit of Palestinian and Israeli victims of Rome Statute crimes.

II. EU ISSUES REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

On 8 March the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) issued a half-yearly [report](#) on Israeli settlements. The summary of the report is presented below.

Advancement of plans for settlement units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem continued at a very high rate in the first half of 2020 (January-July). 14,794 settlement units were advanced in different stages of the planning and implementation process (plans and tenders). 5,525 of the units pertain to settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 9,269 to settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including in locations deep in the West Bank.

In East Jerusalem, a tender for 1,077 units was announced for the sensitive project, which has been frozen for four years, to create an entirely new settlement in Givat Hamatos. In addition, 500 units were advanced for Har Homa E, which would similarly allow for a new settlement in East Jerusalem. Although located in the rest of the West Bank, but in the immediate outskirts of East Jerusalem, 3,401 units were promoted for the E-1 area. If enacted these plans would dramatically sever the contiguity of East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank.

In the rest of the West Bank, tenders for 3,332 units were advanced, including 405 units to the second largest settlement of Beitar Illit located south of Jerusalem, just east of the Green Line, as well as plans for a new industrial zone.

There were other significant developments contributing to settlement expansion in the reporting period, notably an increased rate of court proceedings initiated by settler organisations with the aim of evicting Palestinians from their homes in various neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem. The reporting period also saw a high level of incidents of settler violence, with the highest numbers observed in Hebron. As stated in numerous EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and

threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.¹ The EU has reiterated its strong opposition to Israel’s settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation – including of EU funded projects – evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. The EU has also urged Israel to end all settlement activity and to dismantle the outposts, in line with prior obligations, and maintains that settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

III. CEIRPP CONVENES VIRTUAL EVENT ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

On 10 March, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened a virtual event on “Women, Peace and Security and Beijing+25: Progress and Challenges for Women and Girls in Palestine.” The [Chair’s Summary](#) is reproduced below.

The panel “**Women, Peace and Security and Beijing+25: Progress and Challenges**” on the margins of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was convened virtually, on 10 March 2021, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). The event was moderated by H.E. Ms. Adela Raz,

Vice-Chair of the Committee and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations. It consisted of an opening session with remarks by the Vice-Chair and H.E. Ms. Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. The panel speakers comprised of H.E. Ms. Amal Jadou, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

(State of Palestine), Ms. Hind Khoury, former Minister of State for Jerusalem Affairs (State of Palestine), and Ms. Noor Swirki, a community activist from the Gaza Strip. Member States participated in the two-hour event on WebEx platform. Viewers watched the conference on UN WebTV and the Committee social media channels and had an opportunity to make comments and pose questions to the panellists.

At the opening, **Vice-Chair Raz** introduced the theme of this year’s CSW as “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence against women.” She explained the reference to the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing as a watershed moment for equality between men and women and for defining women’s rights as “human rights.” However, the road to full equality and empowerment of women in many countries including Palestine remained long. On the situation of Palestinian women, she spoke of their burden from living under 54-year-long Israeli military occupation and the limitations it placed on their basic human, social, economic, and political rights as well as their struggle with traditional social norms. The focus on political participation of Palestinian women became even more relevant in view of the announced elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) in 2021 and because of the need to increase female representation in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) while addressing many inequalities, including the disproportionate effects of Covid-19 on Palestinian women.

¹ UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) also reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

In her introductory remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** spoke of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women as an opportunity to shed light on the challenges facing Palestinian women and girls in the OPT, 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing platform and 20 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Although progress was made over the last two decades, many striking inequities remained, and they were being exacerbated by the pandemic. Furthermore, any progress made had been repeatedly undermined by the Israeli occupation, which had affected every aspect of life, inflicted a protracted humanitarian and protection crisis, and exacerbated the challenges faced by Palestinian women and girls due to societal and cultural norms.

Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser, however, underlined how Palestinian women across the region and in diasporas had carved for themselves a pivotal role in their society and in building peace, reconstruction, and development of the Palestinian nation: they had adapted across generations to thrive, overcome hardship while cooperating with each other in grassroot movements and in multiple social and economic sectors. In addition to heading and preserving their own households, Palestinian women had excelled in many professional fields to become writers, artists, ministers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, humanitarians, and innovators. This engagement helped to fast-track their participation in the socio-economic life of Palestine and eased the cultural patriarchy. Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser called for women's equitable place in the Palestinian struggle to achieve the right to self-determination and genuine Israeli-Palestinian peace and security, and for them to be granted leadership roles in the diplomatic arena. She called for the fulfilment of the Beijing platform and SCR1325 as well as the relevant resolutions on the question of Palestine, as they were key for the attainment of inclusion of Palestinian women and a just resolution to the conflict.

Ms. Hind Khoury spoke of the humbling perseverance and resilience of Palestinian women, particularly those under siege in the Gaza Strip and those kept in Israeli prisons for their political activism. As International Women's Day was observed that week, their courage needed to be celebrated. She concurred that a lot of progress had been achieved since the Beijing conference: Palestinian women had joined movements against the occupation through public diplomacy, demonstrations, boycotts, organization of popular resistance, provision of humanitarian assistance and social services. The First Intifada had been key in bringing women's social and national recognition in the public sphere. Ms. Khoury explained that the signing of the Oslo Accords, almost coinciding with the Beijing conference in 1995 and carrying a promise of autonomy, freedom, and increased participation of Palestinian women in national processes, had however regrettably entrenched the Israeli occupation following the assassination of Prime Minister Isaac Rabin the same year and Israel's subsequent efforts to nullify the agreement. Since that time, the Israeli occupation had dramatic consequences on the lives of Palestinian women and girls through the rise of poverty, denial of access to natural resources, settler violence, and military oppression along with the isolation and "Judaization" of East Jerusalem and the blockade of Gaza.

Ms. Khoury explained that the regression in Palestinian women's rights since the Oslo Accords was marked by the gradual change of focus in women's agenda, i.e. away from directly addressing the national struggle to end the Israeli occupation and daily oppression to addressing their own grievances in terms of gender equality and social issues. The system of impunity and denial of accountability for Israeli violations, along with deterioration of the Palestinian democratic institutions and absence of elections, led to the exclusion of the population from the public

discourse, and especially Palestinian youth and women who represent the majority of the population. The fragmentation and division among Palestinian factions over the Oslo Accords and the absence of a successful strategy for liberation in which women could find their place and political role contributed equally to further exclude them. So did the highly skewed balance of power between Palestine and Israel in the peace negotiations and the growing rift between the Palestinian Authority and grassroots organizations. The further demise of the General Union for Palestinian Women (GUPW) led to the mushrooming of women organizations in a donor-driven environment. Ms. Khoury equally criticized Israeli women movements for being politicized and for not addressing enough the issue of occupation. In her closing remarks, she spoke of a renewed hope for a return to multilateral diplomacy after the change in the US administration and the announcement of Palestinian elections. Ms. Khoury made an appeal to Israeli women to play a stronger role in bringing peace between Israel and Palestine. They had succeeded in building important movements such as Women Wage Peace but failed to address the multiple woes of the Israeli occupation and take a political stance on the issue of discrimination, settler violence, and dispossession.

Minister Amal Jadou called for reimagining the Palestinian socio-political system, as it was impossible for the Palestinian people to reignite a path to liberate their homeland with half of their population marginalized. Palestinian women faced an uphill struggle to take up their role in the country while facing the “double violence” of the Israeli occupation and high rates of domestic abuse in their households. She called attention to the women representation quota (26 per cent in lieu of the requested 30 per cent) in the Palestine Legislative Council (PLC) and called for a 50 per cent quota in the future. In addition, she pointed how statistics showed a shocking gap of 72 per cent in ministerial positions with women usually being offered “soft” roles in social affairs and health and not in foreign policy and finance, for example. Also, out of 16 Governors in Palestine there was only one woman, and 12 women ambassadors out of 107. A gap of 65 per cent also existed in the judicial system.

For Minister Jadou, the upcoming elections brought nonetheless a hope for better representation of women and youth within the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and ranks of the leadership. Following the post-Oslo Accords phase and a decrease in women participation in peace negotiations, Palestinian women had since focused on social needs and left the political sphere. She highlighted the importance of a higher representation of women in the PLC to address their plight in all sectors of society.

As for ending the Israeli occupation, Minister Jadou recalled the international community’s responsibility in the implementation of UN resolutions, which have continued to be violated by Israel since the partition plan. However, responsibility also fell on Palestinian women who needed to partner with men to forge the path to the liberation of Palestine. Education and training on leadership roles, raising awareness by the media and a buy-in from the private sector could all contribute to reach this goal. In closing, she stressed how, without the liberation of half of the Palestinian population, there would not be a liberation from the occupation.

Ms. Noor Swirki highlighted the Palestinian presidential decree dated 2 March 2021 restricting the autonomy of civil society and called for the modification of the relief associations and non-governmental organizations law adopted in 2000. She highlighted how Palestinian civil society and women’s groups were crucial partners of the State of Palestine in view of ending the

Israeli occupation. She further explained how traditional social norms as well as the Palestinian de facto authority in the Strip and its measures to restrict civil society's work affected Palestinian women organizations and the civic space in Gaza. This "unsupportive public atmosphere" was reflected in the quality and quantity of women participation, she said. Women were excluded from the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process and the latest talks in Cairo as well as from the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, other national committees, and the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, hence denying women in Gaza the possibility of contributing to a peaceful and sustainable society. This was particularly serious in Gaza, suffering from a dire humanitarian situation as a result of the Israeli blockade and constant military escalation.

In terms of ways forward, Ms. Swirki described the Palestinian elections as the "light at the end of the tunnel," particularly for women who were looking for an opportunity for change and for addressing their legal, protection and healthcare needs as well as their economic empowerment at the national level. The Central Election Commission informed that half of the eligible voters were women, hence these elections, also thanks to an increase in the quota for representation on the lists for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), could bring tangible incremental steps towards a better political participation and the rehabilitation of the Palestinian political system.

During the **Question-and-Answer** session, on ways to ensure the inclusion and participation of Palestinian women at all levels of decision-making, **Ms. Khoury** spoke of the need for an opportunity for Palestinian women to participate in the public sphere, including the upcoming elections, considering their already high political awareness. Heads of lists had already made commitments to include more women. As for the donor community's role, there was a need to recognize the drawbacks of a proliferation of NGOs, which had become a major source of economic income for women in the absence of a development plan and the shrinking of the agricultural sector. She called for the strengthening of the General Union of Palestinian Women and for the inclusion of women in professional unions.

Minister Jadou spoke of the Palestinian government's progress in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with the help of the Ministry of Women Affairs and women's groups. As for the international community's contribution to increasing women's role in politics, she gave the example of a Ministry of Women Affairs' project, supported by several European countries, to train 30 women graduates from different Palestinian universities and sectors on leadership skills.

On existing national mechanisms and national reconciliation, **Ms. Swirki** explained that efforts led by the Ministry of Women Affairs to implement SCR 1325 could be cited as an example of national mechanism to enhance promotion, accountability, and participation of women in decision-making. As for civil society and elections in Gaza, she mentioned women's participation as potential observers and in raising awareness on procedures and on the importance of the political process. Women, however, remained excluded from national reconciliation efforts by the concerned parties. Finally, she called for unconditional funding of civil society in Gaza and for an amendment to the Presidential decree in order to increase the civic space and women's participation in it.

The representative of **Cuba** welcomed the event to raise awareness and denounce the situation of Palestinian women facing the ongoing and intensifying Israeli occupation and reiterated Cuba's

solidarity with the Palestinian people. The representative of **Egypt** lauded the perseverance of Palestinian women in times of great difficulties and highlighted the importance of the “3Rs” approach – Rights, Representation and Resources – in advancing women empowerment. In the Palestinian context, “rights” have broader parameters and include rights to self-determination and return, adding levels of struggle to attain full empowerment. He underlined that Palestinian women’s rights are intertwined with the Palestinian struggle for independence. The representative of **Turkey** appreciated hearing the panellists’ experiences both in terms on Palestinian rights and women’s rights. She noted that more needed to be done to increase women’s participation in negotiations in the Middle East Peace Process.

In her closing, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** reiterated the need for collective action by the international community and accountability vis-à-vis Israel in its responsibility to uphold UN resolutions and abide by international law. She called on all Member States to work together in order to achieve a just solution that would guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, including women’s rights, and the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. She lauded the panellists’ presentations as they reminded of Palestinian women’s strength and resilience and the enormous contribution they continued to make to the Palestinian struggle for justice, freedom, and equal rights. The panellists had also pointed out at internal issues that needed to be prioritized on the road to equality and freedom. She finally saluted the efforts of the many UN agencies and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the capacity-building of women and girls for their full empowerment.

Ambassador Raz closed the event.

IV. FAO ISSUES HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

On 11 March the Food and Agriculture Organization presented its 2021 humanitarian response [plan](#) for Palestine excerpted below.

The high rate of food insecurity in Palestine is driven by poverty and unemployment. Protracted insecurity, continuing economic decline and prolonged restrictions on trade and access to markets combined with the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic have worsened the food security situation for Palestinians in 2020.

To assist 3.5 million people FAO requires \$50 million for January-December 2021.

Objectives

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working with partners in the Food Security Sector to:

- Protect the livelihoods of vulnerable households and restore or enhance their resilience, food security and productive capacity.
- Provide assistance to households suffering from limited access to food and income opportunities so that they can meet their basic food needs.
- Strengthen Food Security Sector coordination.

Activities:

Support women and youth in herding communities

Drought-tolerant seeds | rangeland rehabilitation | water cisterns | animal sheds | small-scale farming inputs | dairy processing equipment | market accessibility through upscaling the capacity of the livestock market | awareness campaigns

Restore agricultural assets and productive capacities

Farms and damaged productive assets (wells, irrigation systems, cisterns, greenhouses) | fertilizers | solar energy units | plant pest control | conditional cash transfers

Protect the livelihoods of fishers

Echo sounders | GPS devices | drift nets | fishnets | cooperatives and social business

Strengthen food security coordination

Food security information monitoring and needs assessment | intervention planning | information sharing | stakeholder coordination | disaster risk reduction | resilience building

Impact on food security

Palestinians have endured recurrent shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-induced shocks that have compromised their resilience and led to soaring food insecurity. In the West Bank, the agriculture sector has suffered as a result of demolition and destruction of productive assets and limited access to land and water resources. In the Gaza Strip, prolonged restrictions on trade and access to markets for inputs and exports, combined with repeated violent confrontations and persistent energy shortages, continue to limit agricultural production and income-generating opportunities.

Urgent and essential health-related restrictions to contain the spread of COVID-19 have been associated with an economic decline that has led to rising unemployment and under-employment and to decreasing purchasing power. This has reduced livelihood opportunities and incomes of vulnerable families. The restrictions have disrupted national agrifood supply chains, negatively impacting households and other food system stakeholders. Small-scale and marginal producers are facing unprecedented challenges in securing production inputs and accessing credit and markets, constraining their production capacity. Moreover, they have seen a reduction in the demand for their produce. Consequently, some of these producers have resorted to destocking or have produced less with a lower quality. Many are finding it difficult to resume their production after the restrictions were lifted.

Agriculture is an important source of livelihood for thousands of families, and it is critical to the resilience of Palestinian households and communities. Providing inputs to farmers, fishers and herders as well as to food processors, along with relevant capacity building and increased access to markets, will boost incomes, contributing to self-reliance and dignity. Furthermore, restoring productive assets and installing solar-powered energy systems will revitalize the sector's infrastructure and its productive capacity. This will ensure that livelihoods are not irreversibly lost.

V. OIC DENOUNCES OPENING OF OFFICES AFFILIATED TO CZECH AND KOSOVO EMBASSIES IN JERUSALEM

On 15 March, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation General Secretariat issued the following [statement](#).

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has denounced the opening in the occupied city of Al-Quds of an office affiliated to the Czech Embassy and another affiliated to the Embassy of Kosovo. It affirmed that this illegal act violates international law and all relevant UN resolutions, particularly UN Security Council resolution 478, which prohibits the establishment of diplomatic missions in the occupied city.

The General Secretariat called for abstaining from causing prejudice to the historical, legal and political status of the occupied city of Al-Quds, which forms an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

VI. FIRST SHIPMENT OF COVAX VACCINES ARRIVES IN PALESTINE

On 21 March, UNICEF issued the following [press release](#).

On 17 March, the State of Palestine received the first shipment of 37,440 doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and 24,000 doses of the Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine from COVAX facility as part of the first wave allocation. These vaccine doses were transferred to the Ministry of Health's ultra-cold chain and vaccine storage facilities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Further consignments of COVAX vaccine doses are planned for the State of Palestine to cover 20 per cent of the population – approximately 1 million people. As with the current consignments, these doses are for both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the prioritization criteria of the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan.

COVAX is a global facility representing partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO), Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) working on the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. It includes 190 countries with a total population of more than 7 billion people and ensures fair and equal access to COVID-19 vaccines supplied through UNICEF. WHO and UNICEF are supporting the Government of the State of Palestine's national vaccination campaign.

Dr Ayadil Saparbekov, acting WHO Head of Office for West Bank and Gaza said: "WHO welcomes the opportunity to be able to help Palestinians fight the Coronavirus with this important delivery of vaccines aimed initially at frontline healthcare workers. People in both the West Bank and Gaza desperately need these vaccines, which is an effective tool in the fight against COVID-19, in addition to the public health measures already in place. We're proud to play our part in the global COVAX initiative, alongside our partners, as it helps to fill the gaps where vaccines are

needed and in short supply. Today’s delivery can give Palestinians a sense of hope that life can return to normal.”

“We have been battling COVID-19 for one year now. These vaccine doses provide us with another tool in fighting the spread of this virus – a critical tool. Nevertheless, it is critical that, alongside the vaccination of the frontline health workers and vulnerable groups, we also continue to reinforce public health measures such as correctly using masks, handwashing, and physical distancing. This vaccine will help return the Gaza Strip and the West Bank closer to normal daily life. Children in the State of Palestine have endured much this last year. It is a privilege for UNICEF to support the Ministry of Health and our partners to ensure equity of vaccine delivery to both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, starting with health care workers and the most vulnerable groups,” said Lucia Elmi, UNICEF Special Representative to the State of Palestine.

VII. QUARTET DISCUSSES RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS TOWARDS TWO-STATE SOLUTION

On 23 March, the Quartet Envoys issued the following [statement](#).

The Envoys of the Middle East Quartet from the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Nations met virtually to discuss returning to meaningful negotiations that will lead to a two-State solution, including tangible steps to advance freedom, security and prosperity for Palestinians and Israelis, which is important in its own right.

The Envoys also discussed the situation on the ground, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic, the unsustainable disparity in economic development between Israelis and Palestinians, and the need for the parties to refrain from unilateral actions that make a two-State solution more difficult to achieve.

VIII. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS THREE RESOLUTIONS ON PALESTINE

On 23 March the Human Rights Council adopted two draft resolutions under agenda item 7, “Human Rights Situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories”, and one draft resolution under agenda item 2, “Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General”, reproduced below.

Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Adopted by a recorded vote (42 to 3, with 2 abstentions) ([A/HRC/46/L.18](#))

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the provisions of Articles 1 and 55 thereof, which affirm the right of peoples to self-determination, reaffirming the need for the scrupulous respect of the principle of refraining in international relations from the threat or use of force, as specified in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance

with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, and affirming the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory resulting from the threat or use of force,

Guided also by the provisions of article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirm that all peoples have the right to self-determination,

Guided further by the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, in particular article 1 thereof, and by the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on 25 June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights, and in particular Part I, paragraphs 2 and 3, relating to the right of self-determination of all peoples and especially those subject to foreign occupation,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 181 A and B (II) of 29 November 1947 and 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, and all other relevant United Nations resolutions, including those adopted by the Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, that confirm and define the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to self-determination,

Recalling also Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002 and 1402 (2002) of 30 March 2002,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012,

Reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, relevant United Nations resolutions and declarations, and the provisions of international covenants and instruments relating to the right to self-determination as an international principle and as a right of all peoples in the world, and emphasizing that this jus cogens norm of international law is a basic prerequisite for achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East,

Deploring the plight of millions of Palestine refugees and displaced persons who have been uprooted from their homes, and expressing deep regret about the fact that more than half of the Palestinian people continue to live in exile in refugee camps throughout the region and in the diaspora,

Affirming the applicability of the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources to the Palestinian situation as an integral component of the right to self-determination,

Recalling the conclusion of the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, that the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, which is a right *erga omnes*, is severely impeded by Israel, the occupying Power, through the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which, together with the Israeli settlement enterprise and measures previously taken, results in serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the forcible transfer of Palestinians and Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land,

Considering that the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people is being violated further by Israel through the existence and ongoing expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Noting that the failure to bring the occupation to an end after 50 years heightens the international responsibility to uphold the human rights of the Palestinian people, and expressing its deep regret that the question of Palestine remains unresolved 70 years since the resolution on partition,

Reaffirming that the United Nations will continue to be engaged on the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law,

1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to live in freedom, justice and dignity and the right to their independent State of Palestine;

2. *Also reaffirms* the need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in conformity with international law and other internationally agreed parameters, including all relevant United Nations resolutions;

3. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and further reaffirms its support for the solution of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security;

4. *Expresses grave concern* at any action taken in contravention of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions relevant to Jerusalem;

5. *Also expresses grave concern* at the fragmentation and the changes in the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which are resulting from Israel's continuing construction and expansion of settlements, forcible transfer of Palestinians and construction of the wall, stresses that this fragmentation, which undermines the possibility of the Palestinian people realizing their right to self-determination, is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and emphasizes in this regard the need for respect for and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

6. *Confirms* that the right of the Palestinian people to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be used in the interest of their national development, the well-being of the Palestinian people and as part of the realization of their right to self-determination;

7. *Calls upon* all States to ensure their obligations of non-recognition, non-aid or assistance with regard to the serious breaches of peremptory norms of international law by Israel, in particular of the prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force, in order to ensure the exercise of the right to self-determination, and also calls upon them to cooperate further to bring, through lawful means, an end to these serious breaches and a reversal of Israel's illegal policies and practices;

8. *Urges* all States to adopt measures as required to promote the realization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and to render assistance to the United Nations in

carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter regarding the implementation of this right;

9. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. Adopted by a recorded vote (36 to 3, with 8 abstentions) ([A/HRC/46.L30](#))

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and affirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,

Reaffirming that all States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, as stated in the Charter and elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other applicable instruments,

Recalling all relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly reaffirming, inter alia, the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem,

Recalling also all relevant United Nations reports, including reports by mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, and calling upon all duty bearers and United Nations bodies to pursue the implementation of recommendations contained therein,

Noting the accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, and its accession on 2 January 2015 to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

Reaffirming the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention), to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to the occupied Syrian Golan,

Recalling the declarations adopted at the Conferences of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, held in Geneva on 5 December 2001 and 17 December 2014, and reaffirming that States should not recognize as lawful a situation arising from breaches of peremptory norms of international law,

Affirming that the transfer by the occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population to the territory it occupies constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant provisions of customary law, including those codified in Additional Protocol I to the four Geneva Conventions,

Recalling 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, and recalling also General Assembly resolutions ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 and ES-10/17 of 15 December 2006,

Expressing grave concern at the continuing construction by Israel of the wall inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, and expressing its concern in particular at the route of the wall in departure from the Armistice Line of 1949, and in such a way as to include the great majority of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, thereby causing humanitarian hardship and a serious decline in socioeconomic conditions for the Palestinian people, fragmenting the territorial contiguity of the Territory and undermining its viability, creating a fait accompli on the ground that could be tantamount to de facto annexation in departure from the Armistice Line of 1949, and making the two-State solution physically impossible to implement,

Noting that the International Court of Justice concluded, inter alia, that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been established in breach of international law,

Expressing its grave concern at any action taken by any body, governmental or non-governmental, in violation of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions relevant to Jerusalem,

Expressing its grave concern also at the calls made by Israeli officials for the annexation of Palestinian lands,

Noting that Israel has been planning, implementing, supporting and encouraging the establishment and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967, through, inter alia, the granting of benefits and incentives to settlements and settlers,

Affirming that the Israeli settlement policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, seriously endanger the viability of the two-State solution, undermining the physical possibility of its realization and entrenching a one-State reality of unequal rights,

Noting in this regard that the Israeli settlements fragment the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, into isolated geographical units, severely undermining the exercise of Palestinian self-determination, and deeply concerned that the magnitude, persistence and character of the settlement enterprise suggest that the occupation has been established with the intention of making it permanent, in violation of the prohibition of acquisition of territory resulting from the use of force,

Noting also that the settlement enterprise and the impunity associated with its persistence, expansion and related violence continue to be a root cause of many violations of the Palestinians' human rights, and constitute the main factors perpetuating Israel's belligerent occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967,

Deploring in particular the construction and expansion of settlements by Israel in and around occupied East Jerusalem, including its so-called E-1 plan, which aims to connect its illegal settlements around and further isolate occupied East Jerusalem, the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes and eviction of Palestinian families from the city, the revocation of Palestinian

residency rights in the city, and ongoing settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, all of which further fragment and undermine the contiguity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

Gravely concerned about all acts of terror, violence, destruction, harassment, provocation and incitement by extremist Israeli settlers and groups of armed settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, against Palestinian civilians, including children, and their properties, which are a long-standing phenomenon aimed at, inter alia, displacing the occupied population and facilitating the expansion of settlements, and stressing the need for Israel to investigate and to ensure accountability for all of these acts,

Aware of the detrimental impact of the Israeli settlements on Palestinian and other Arab natural resources, especially as a result of the confiscation of land, denial of access to farmers and the dispossession of their land and crops, the forced diversion of water resources, the destruction of orchards and crops and the seizure of water wells by Israeli settlers, and of the dire socioeconomic consequences in this regard, including the loss of livelihoods in the agricultural sector, which precludes the Palestinian people from being able to exercise permanent sovereignty over their natural resources,

Aware also that numerous Israeli policies and practices relating to settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, amount to blatant discrimination, including through the creation of a system privileging Israeli settlements and settlers against the Palestinian people, and in violation of their human rights,

Recalling the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which place responsibilities on all business enterprises to respect human rights by, inter alia, refraining from contributing to human rights abuses arising from conflict, and call upon States to provide adequate assistance to business enterprises to assess and address the heightened risks of abuses in conflict-affected areas, including by ensuring that their current policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures are effective in addressing the risk of business involvement in gross human rights abuses,

Noting that, in situations of armed conflict, business enterprises should respect the standards of international humanitarian law, and concerned that some business enterprises have, directly and indirectly, enabled, facilitated and profited from the construction and growth of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

Emphasizing the importance for States to act in accordance with their own national legislation on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law with regard to business activities that result in human rights abuses,

Concerned that economic activities facilitate the expansion and entrenchment of settlements, aware that the conditions of harvesting and production of products made in settlements involve, inter alia, the exploitation of the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calling upon all States to respect their legal obligations in this regard, including the obligation to ensure respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention,

Aware that products wholly or partially produced in settlements have been labelled as originating from Israel, and concerned about the significant role that the production and trade of such products plays in helping to support and maintain the settlements,

Aware also of the role of private individuals, associations and charities in third States that are involved in providing funding to Israeli settlements and settlement-based entities, contributing to the maintenance and expansion of settlements,

Noting that a number of business enterprises have decided to disengage from relationships or activities associated with the Israeli settlements owing to the risks involved,

Expressing its concern at the failure of Israel, the occupying Power, to cooperate fully with the relevant United Nations mechanisms, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli settlements established since 1967 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal under international law, and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, and to economic and social development;

2. *Calls upon* Israel to accept the de jure applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to the occupied Syrian Golan, to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Convention, in particular article 49 thereof, and to comply with all its obligations under international law and to cease immediately all actions causing the alteration of the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease all settlement activities in all the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and in this regard calls for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including, inter alia, resolutions 446 (1979) of 22 March 1979, 452 (1979) of 20 July 1979, 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980, 476 (1980) of 30 June 1980, 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981, 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003 and 2334 (2016) of 23 December 2016;

4. *Also demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with its legal obligations, as mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice, including to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall being built in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, to dismantle forthwith the structure therein situated, to repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto, and to make reparation for the damage caused to all natural or legal persons affected by the construction of the wall;

5. *Condemns* the continuing settlement and related activities by Israel, including the transfer of its nationals into the occupied territory, the construction and expansion of settlements, the expropriation and de facto annexation of land, the demolition of homes and community infrastructure, disruptions to the livelihood of protected persons, the confiscation and destruction of property, including humanitarian relief consignments, the forcible transfer of Palestinian

civilians or the threat thereof, including of entire communities, and the construction of bypass roads, which change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, constitute a violation of international humanitarian law, in particular article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of international human rights law, and undermine the viability of the two-State solution;

6. *Expresses its grave concern* at and calls for the cessation of:

(a) The conduct of economic activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, for the benefit of the settlement enterprise and associated activities;

(b) The expropriation of Palestinian land, the demolition of Palestinian homes, demolition orders, forced evictions and “relocation” plans, the obstruction and destruction of humanitarian assistance, including projects funded by the international community, and the creation of a coercive environment and unbearable living conditions by Israel in areas identified for the expansion and construction of settlements, and other practices aimed at the forcible transfer of the Palestinian civilian population, including Bedouin communities and herders, and further settlement activities, including the denial of access to water and other basic services by Israel to Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in areas slated for settlement expansion, and including the appropriation of Palestinian property through, inter alia, the declaration of “State lands”, closed “military zones”, “national parks” and “archaeological” sites to facilitate and advance the expansion or construction of settlements and related infrastructure, in violation of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;

(c) Israeli measures in the form of policies, laws and practices that have the effect of preventing the full participation of Palestinians in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and prevent their full development in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip;

7. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power:

(a) To end without delay its occupation of the territories occupied since 1967, which may be contrary to international law, to reverse the settlement policy in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and, as a first step towards the dismantlement of the settlement enterprise, to stop immediately the expansion of existing settlements, including so-called natural growth and related activities, to prevent any new installation of settlers in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem, and to discard its so-called E-1 plan;

(b) To put an end to all of the human rights violations linked to the presence of settlements, especially of the right to self-determination, and to fulfil its international obligations to provide effective remedy for victims;

(c) To take immediate measures to prohibit and eradicate all policies and practices that discriminate against and disproportionately affect the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, by, inter alia, putting an end to the system of separate roads for the exclusive use of Israeli settlers, who reside illegally in the said territory, the complex combination of movement restrictions consisting of the wall, roadblocks and a permit

regime that only affects the Palestinian population, the application of a two-tier legal system that has facilitated the establishment and consolidation of the settlements, and other violations and forms of institutionalized discrimination;

(d) To cease the requisition and all other forms of unlawful appropriation of Palestinian land, including so-called State land, and its allocation for the establishment and expansion of settlements, and to halt the granting of benefits and incentives to settlements and settlers;

(e) To put an end to all practices and policies resulting in the territorial fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and which are isolating Palestinian communities into separate enclaves and deliberately changing the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(f) To take and implement serious measures, including the confiscation of arms and enforcement of criminal sanctions, with the aim of ensuring full accountability for and preventing all acts of violence by Israeli settlers, and to take other measures to guarantee the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians and Palestinian properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

(g) To bring to a halt all actions, including those perpetrated by Israeli settlers, harming the environment, including 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 water and land resources, and which pose an environmental, sanitation and health threat to the civilian population;

(h) To cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the occupied Syrian Golan;

8. *Welcomes* the adoption of the European Union Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the European Union since 2014;

9. *Urges* all States and international organizations to ensure that they are not taking actions that either recognize, aid or assist the expansion of settlements or the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to continue to actively pursue policies that ensure respect for their obligations under international law with regard to these and all other illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

10. *Reminds* all States of their legal obligations as mentioned in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall, not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction, and to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in the Fourth Geneva Convention;

11. *Calls upon* all States:

(a) To distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967, including not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in these territories with regard to, inter alia, the issue of trade with settlements, consistent with their obligations under international law;

(b) To implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to take appropriate measures to help to ensure that businesses domiciled in their territory and/or under their jurisdiction, including those owned or controlled by them, refrain from committing, contributing to, enabling or benefiting from the human rights abuses of Palestinians, in accordance with the expected standard of conduct in the Guiding Principles and relevant international laws and standards, by taking appropriate steps in view of the immitigable nature of the adverse impact of their activities on human rights;

(c) To provide guidance to individuals and businesses on the financial, reputational and legal risks, including the possibility of liability for corporate involvement in gross human rights abuses and the abuses of the rights of individuals, of becoming involved in settlement-related activities, including through financial transactions, investments, purchases, the importation of settlement products, procurements, loans, the provision of services, and other economic and financial activities in or benefiting Israeli settlements, to inform businesses of these risks in the formulation of their national action plans for the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to ensure that their policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures effectively address the heightened risks of operating a business in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

(d) To increase monitoring of settler violence with a view to promoting accountability;

12. *Calls upon* business enterprises to take all measures necessary to comply with their responsibilities under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and relevant international laws and standards with respect to their activities in or in relation to the Israeli settlements and the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to avoid the adverse impact of such activities on human rights, and to avoid contributing to the establishment, maintenance, development or consolidation of Israeli settlements or the exploitation of the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

13. *Calls upon* the relevant United Nations bodies to take all necessary measures and actions within their mandates to ensure full respect for and compliance with Human Rights Council resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011, on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other relevant international laws and standards, and to ensure the implementation of the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, which provides a global standard for upholding human rights in relation to business activities that are connected with Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

14. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the implementation of the provisions of the present resolution to the Human Rights Council at its forty-ninth session;

15. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice. Adopted by a recorded vote (32 to 6, with 8 abstentions) ([A/HRC/46/L.31](#))

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and all relevant conventions, and affirming that these human rights instruments, among others, are applicable to and must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Recalling also the relevant rules and principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention), which is applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Recalling further the statement of 15 July 1999 and the declarations adopted on 5 December 2001 and 17 December 2014 at the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Recalling relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council,

Recalling also relevant United Nations reports, including the outcome reports of fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry, and the important recommendations made therein, and calling upon all duty bearers and United Nations bodies to pursue the implementation of those recommendations,

Stressing the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967,

Affirming the obligation of all parties to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law,

Emphasizing the need for States to investigate and prosecute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, to end impunity, to uphold their obligations to ensure respect and to promote international accountability,

Regretting the lack of progress made in the conduct of domestic investigations in accordance with international law standards, and aware of the existence of numerous legal, procedural and practical obstacles in the Israeli and Palestinian civil and criminal legal systems contributing to the denial of access to justice for Palestinian victims and of their right to an effective judicial remedy,

Noting the accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, and its accession on 2 January 2015 to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

Recalling 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,

Noting in particular the Court's reply, including that the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime are contrary to international law,

Reaffirming the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and deeply concerned at the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, through settlement activities and other measures that are tantamount to de facto annexation of Palestinian land,

Gravely concerned that long-standing impunity for international law violations has allowed for the recurrence of grave violations without consequence, and 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 and access to effective remedy, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

Expressing grave concern at reports of serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law, including of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and all other actions designed to change the legal status, geographical nature and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Deploring the continuing and negative consequences of the conflicts in and around the Gaza Strip, including all casualties, particularly among Palestinian civilians, including children, and ongoing violations of international law, and calling for full respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and for the principles of legality, distinction, precaution and proportionality,

Gravely concerned about the dire humanitarian, socioeconomic and security situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the prolonged closures and severe economic and movement restrictions that in effect amount to a blockade, and about the short- and long-term detrimental impact of this situation, and the widespread destruction and continued impediments to the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, on the human rights situation,

Expressing grave concern at the firing of rockets into Israel,

Stressing the need to end immediately the closure of the Gaza Strip and for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing, both of 15 November 2005, to allow for the freedom of movement of the Palestinian civilian population within and into and out of the Gaza Strip, while taking into account Israeli security concerns,

Stressing also the need to end the Israeli policy of closures and the imposition of severe restrictions and checkpoints, several of which have been transformed into structures akin to permanent border crossings, other physical obstacles and a permit regime, which are applied in a discriminatory manner affecting the Palestinian population only and all of which obstruct the freedom of movement of persons and goods, including medical and humanitarian goods, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and impair the Territory's contiguity, violating the human rights of the Palestinian people,

Stressing further the need for all parties, in conformity with relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations and to ensure the rapid and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel, and the delivery of supplies and equipment, in order to allow such personnel to perform efficiently their task of assisting affected civilian populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons,

Deploring all policies and practices whereby Israeli settlers who reside illegally in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are accorded preferential treatment over the Palestinian population, and also deploring the widespread violations of the human rights of Palestinian civilians,

Expressing deep concern that thousands of Palestinians, including many children and women and elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, continue to be detained and held in Israeli prisons or detention centres under harsh conditions, including unhygienic conditions, solitary confinement, restricted access to proper medical care, including in a time of pandemic, denial of family visits and denial of due process, that impair their well-being, and expressing deep concern also at the ill-treatment and harassment of Palestinian prisoners and all reports of torture,

Recalling the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), and calling for respect for those rules,

Recalling also the prohibition under international humanitarian law of individual and mass forcible transfers, and of the deportation of protected persons, from occupied territory, and the prohibition of deportation or transfer by the occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies,

Deploring the practice of withholding the bodies of those killed, and calling for the release of the bodies that have not yet been returned to their relatives, in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law,

Recognizing the work of Palestinian, Israeli and international civil society actors and human rights defenders in documenting and countering violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Convinced of the need for an international presence to monitor the situation, to contribute to ending the violence and protecting the Palestinian civilian population and to help the parties to implement the agreements reached, and in this regard recalling the positive contribution of the

Temporary International Presence in Hebron, and regretting the unilateral decision by Israel not to renew its mandate,

1. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, withdraw from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and stresses that all efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be grounded in respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law and relevant United Nations resolutions;

2. *Stresses* the imperative of credible and comprehensive accountability for all violations of international law in order to establish a sustainable peace;

3. *Reiterates* that all measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and contrary to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council are illegal and have no validity;

4. *Deplores* the persistent non-cooperation of Israel with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and other United Nations mechanisms seeking to investigate alleged violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calls for full cooperation with the Council and all its special procedures, relevant mechanisms and inquiries, and with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

5. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all illegal actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including the construction of settlements; the demolition of residential structures, including punitive home demolitions; the forced eviction of Palestinian inhabitants and the revocation of residency permits of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem through various discriminatory laws; excavations in and around religious and historic sites; and all other unilateral measures aimed at altering the character, status and demographic composition of the territory as a whole, all of which have, inter alia, a grave and detrimental impact on the human rights of the Palestinian people and the prospects for a just and peaceful settlement;

6. *Also demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with its legal obligations under international law, as mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice and demanded by the General Assembly in its resolutions ES-10/15 and ES-10/13, and that it immediately cease the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, dismantle forthwith the structure situated therein, repeal or render ineffective all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto, and make reparation for all damage caused by the construction of the wall, which has had a grave impact on the human rights and the socioeconomic living conditions of the Palestinian people;

7. *Calls upon* Israel to immediately cease any demolitions or plans for demolitions that would result in the forcible transfer or forced eviction of Palestinians, to facilitate the return of those Palestinian communities already subjected to forcible transfer or eviction to their original dwellings, and to ensure adequate housing and legal security of tenure;

8. *Expresses grave concern* at the restrictions imposed by Israel that impede the access of Christian and Muslim worshippers to holy sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including

East Jerusalem, and calls upon Israel to ensure non-discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and the preservation of and peaceful access to all religious sites;

9. *Urges* Israel to ensure that water resource allocation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is not discriminatory, which has a broad impact on human rights, including in the Jordan Valley, affected by the destruction of the wells of local civilians, roof water tanks and other water and irrigation facilities under military and settler operation since 1967;

10. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, and that it cease all measures and actions taken in breach of these bodies of law, and discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian territory that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, including if carried out as collective punishment in violation of international humanitarian law, and any obstruction of humanitarian assistance, and that it fully respect human rights law and comply with its legal obligations in this regard;

11. *Reiterates* the need for respect for the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and for guarantees of the freedom of movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, including movement into and from East Jerusalem, into and from the Gaza Strip, between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and to and from the outside world;

12. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, cease immediately its imposition of prolonged closures and economic and movement restrictions, including those amounting to a blockade on the Gaza Strip, which severely restricts the freedom of movement of Palestinians within, into and out of Gaza and their access to basic rights, and which has a direct impact on livelihoods, economic sustainability and development throughout Gaza, and in this regard calls upon Israel to implement fully the Agreement on Movement and Access and the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing in order to allow for the sustained and regular movement of persons and goods and for the acceleration of long overdue reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, while taking into account Israeli security concerns;

13. *Condemns* all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, including unlawful lethal and other excessive use of force by Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, including against civilians with special protected status under international law and who pose no imminent threat to life;

14. *Also condemns* the firing of rockets against Israeli civilian areas resulting in loss of life and injury, and calls for an end to all actions by militants and armed groups contrary to international law;

15. *Calls upon* all States to promote compliance with international law and all High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions, and to fulfil their obligations under articles 146, 147 and 148 of the said Convention with regard to penal sanctions, grave breaches and the responsibilities of the High Contracting Parties;

16. *Urges* all States to refrain from transferring arms when, in accordance with applicable national procedures and international obligations and standards, they assess that there is a clear risk that such arms might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations or abuses of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law;

17. *Reiterates* the responsibility of Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the right to health of all persons within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to facilitate the immediate, sustained and unfettered passage of humanitarian relief, including the access of medical personnel, their equipment, transport and supplies to all areas under occupation, including the Gaza Strip, and the granting of exit permits for patients in need of medical treatment outside the Gaza Strip, and stresses the need for the unhindered passage of ambulances at checkpoints, especially in times of conflict;

18. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to comply immediately with its international law obligations to the protected occupied population, and ensure non-discriminatory access to vaccines for immunization against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including in coordination with the Government of the State of Palestine;

19. *Urges* Member States to continue to provide emergency assistance to the Palestinian people to alleviate the financial crisis and the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation, particularly in the Gaza Strip;

20. *Calls* for an end to all harassment, threats, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society actors who peacefully advocate for the rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including by cooperating with United Nations human rights bodies, calls for their protection, and underscores the need to investigate all such acts and to ensure accountability and effective remedies;

21. *Expresses deep concern* at the conditions of the Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including minors, in Israeli jails and detention centres, and at the continued use of administrative detention, and calls upon Israel to explicitly prohibit torture, including psychological torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; to fully respect and abide by its international law obligations towards all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in its custody, including ensuring access to medical care and vaccinations, including in the context of the ongoing pandemic; to implement fully the agreement reached in May 2012 for a prompt and independent investigation into all cases of death in custody; and to release immediately all Palestinian prisoners, including Palestinian legislators, detained in violation of international law;

22. *Demands* that Israel cease its policy of transferring prisoners from the Occupied Palestinian Territory into the territory of Israel, and respect fully its obligations under article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention;

23. *Urges* Israel to ensure that any arrest, detention and/or trial of Palestinian children is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including by refraining from holding criminal proceedings against them in military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights and that infringe upon their right to non-discrimination;

24. *Emphasizes* the need to ensure that all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are held to account through appropriate, fair and independent national or international criminal justice mechanisms, and to ensure the provision of an effective remedy for all victims, including full reparations, and stresses the need to pursue practical steps towards these goals to ensure justice for all victims and to contribute to the prevention of future violations;

25. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Human Rights Council at its forty-ninth session, to be followed by an interactive dialogue;

26. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

IX. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 2334

On 25 March, Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, presented to the Council the Secretary-General's 17th report on the implementation of resolution [2334](#) (2016). His [briefing](#) is reproduced below.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote this briefing to presenting his 17th report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), covering the period from 11 December to 23 March.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” and to “fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.” Settlement activity has, nevertheless, continued during the reporting period.

On 17 and 18 January, Israeli authorities advanced plans for some 800 housing units and tendered some 1,900 units in Area C settlements. An additional 210 units were tendered in East Jerusalem. Some 40 percent of these units are in settlements deep inside the occupied West Bank. Over 200 units are in outposts, illegal also under Israeli law, that Israeli authorities are regularizing retroactively.

On 19 January, the Jerusalem District Court denied an injunction to freeze the tendering process for some 1,200 units in Givat Hamatos. The winning bids were announced on 20 January. Establishment of this new settlement will further consolidate a ring of settlements along the southern perimeter of Jerusalem that would significantly damage prospects for a future, contiguous Palestinian State.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, 325 structures were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities or demolished by their owners to avoid heavy Israeli demolition fees. These actions resulted in the displacement of 465 people, including 253 children and 105 women.

On five occasions in February, most recently on 22 February, the ISF demolished or confiscated 80 structures in the Palestinian Bedouin community of Humsa al-Bqai'a in an Israeli declared firing zone in the Jordan Valley. The actions repeatedly displaced some 63 people, including 36 children. Israeli authorities informed the community that it must relocate to a site near the village of Ein Shibli.

On 15 February and 2 March, the Jerusalem District Court rejected appeals against evictions of thirteen Palestinian households, some 52 people, in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The appeals process to the Supreme Court is ongoing. Israeli courts also upheld eviction orders against six Palestinian families, some 80 individuals, living in the Silwan neighbourhood.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction.” Unfortunately, violence continued daily.

Overall, four Palestinians, including two children, were killed by Israeli security forces (ISF) during demonstrations, clashes, security operations, attacks against Israeli security personnel, and other incidents. 480 Palestinians, including seven women and 66 children, were injured, including 55 by live ammunition. One Israeli woman was killed, and 12 members of the Israeli security forces injured. In addition, 18 Israeli civilians, including three women and five children, were injured by Palestinians in clashes, rock and Molotov cocktail throwing, attacks and other incidents.

In Gaza, Palestinian militants launched six rockets and one incendiary balloon from Gaza into Israel. In response, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) fired 11 missiles into Gaza, striking what it said were Hamas positions, as well as open areas. Seven Palestinian civilians were injured in these incidents, including one child.

In the occupied West Bank on 20 December, a 52-year-old Israeli woman was killed by blows from a stone near the settlement of Tal Menashe. On 24 December, Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian man near Jenin, who they said confessed to the killing.

On 21 December, a 17-year-old Palestinian opened fire at an Israeli police post in the Old City of Jerusalem and was subsequently shot and killed by the ISF.

On 1 January, further South in the occupied West Bank, a Palestinian man was paralyzed after being shot by Israeli forces during a dispute over the seizure of an electricity generator. An initial IDF internal probe found that the shooting was accidental, an account disputed by Palestinian eyewitnesses. The IDF opened a further enquiry into the incident.

On 5 January, a Palestinian man was shot and killed by ISF at the Gush Etzyon junction in the occupied West Bank after reportedly attempting to throw a knife at ISF personnel.

On 26 January, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy tried to stab a female Israeli soldier near the settlement of Ariel and was subsequently shot and killed by ISF. Israel has withheld the body.

On 31 January, a 36-year-old Palestinian man was shot and killed by the ISF as he ran, reportedly carrying an improvised weapon, towards officers stationed at the Gush Etzyon junction.

On 19 March, ISF killed a Palestinian man during a demonstration in Beit Dajan, near Nablus. The man was reportedly shot in the head with three bullets, while he was using a slingshot to throw stones at ISF.

Settler-related violence in the occupied West Bank continued. There have been 116 attacks by Israeli settlers and others against Palestinians, resulting in two Palestinians killed, 37 injuries and damage to Palestinian-owned properties. Palestinians perpetrated some 170 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians, resulting in 18 injuries and damage to property, according to Israeli sources.

On 3 January, an Israeli woman was critically injured by a rock thrown at her vehicle while she was driving near Deir Nidham, close to Qalqilya.

On 5 February, a Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli settlers in the Sadeh Ephraim Farm outpost in the northern West Bank, after reportedly attempting to break into a house. The ISF characterized the incident as a terrorist attack, while stating that the man was unarmed and that no weapons were found in his possession.

On 23 February, Israeli authorities filed an indictment against a 17-year-old Israeli boy accused of throwing stun grenades into Palestinian homes in the West Bank village of Sarta, causing property damage.

On 13 March, Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian family, including seven children aged 1 to 14, in Shi'b al Buttum, south of Hebron. The father was hospitalized with serious injuries. Israeli police have opened an investigation.

On 5 February, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber decided that the Court's jurisdiction extends to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 3 March, the ICC Prosecutor confirmed in a statement that her office has initiated an investigation respecting the situation in Palestine, covering crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court alleged to have been committed since 13 June 2014.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Some Palestinian and Israeli officials continued to use such rhetoric during the reporting period.

A senior Fatah official said that Israel was carrying out a "second Holocaust" against Palestinians. A Palestinian Authority (PA) official used anti-Semitic language to describe Jews, while another PA official accused Israel of "striving to destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque." A senior Hamas official called for "annihilating the monstrous State [of Israel]," saying that "the Zionist enemy" seeks to "corrupt all of humanity."

A Member of Knesset praised the establishment of outposts, saying the settlers who live in them are "preventing with their own bodies any possibility of the future establishment of a Palestinian terror state in the heart of the State of Israel."

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.” Some positive steps were recorded during the period.

On 15 January, Palestinian President Abbas issued a decree calling for legislative, presidential, and Palestinian National Council (PNC) elections.

On 9 February, Palestinian factions concluded talks in Cairo resolving several long-standing differences. The areas of agreement include recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; establishment of an electoral court with appointments made by consensus; and the release of all detainees held on the basis of their political affiliation or opinion. On 20 February and 1 March, President Abbas issued decrees to enact the agreements. Initial reports suggest that a number of detainees have been released. The factions met again in Cairo on 15 March. Despite requests to ease restrictions on prospective candidates, the faction leaders reaffirmed current modalities for the conduct of the elections.

On 17 February, the Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC) concluded voter registration and announced registration of over 91 per cent of eligible voters.

The candidate nomination period was opened by the CEC on 20 March and will conclude on 31 March.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic remains a persistent health threat that has had major socioeconomic consequences across the West Bank and Gaza. In February and March, new COVID-19 cases increased significantly in the West Bank. Numbers in Gaza remain low but have recently increased again after a significant decline.

The Palestinian vaccination campaign has begun, although availability of vaccines remains a key concern. The global COVAX-AMC facility delivered its first batch of some 60,000 vaccines to the West Bank and Gaza on 17 March. Approximately 70,000 additional vaccines were reportedly delivered to Palestinians, including in Gaza, by donations from the Russian Federation and the United Arab Emirates. Israel, where the vaccination campaign is progressing at a quick pace, indicated that the vaccination of the Palestinian population is the responsibility of the Palestinian authority. Nevertheless, Israel has facilitated deliveries across the OPT and extended its vaccination program to some Palestinian populations, including in East Jerusalem. This includes Israel’s provision of some 5,000 vaccines to the Palestinian Authority, as well as the vaccination of over 100,000 Palestinians holding permits to enter Israel, including Palestinian health workers in Israel. In the last days of the reporting period, there were reports of progress in talks about increased vaccine provision, including by Israel.

The COVID-19 pandemic, alongside the impact of the occupation and the protracted humanitarian crisis, has worsened the socio-economic conditions of women across the OPT. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs, gender-based violence has soared 300 per cent since the pandemic began; women’s labour force participation rate has shrunk to 16 per cent; and only 14 percent of senior positions in the public sector are held by women.

On 23 February, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) met virtually. The parties renewed their commitment to enhance cooperation and the donor community called on them to take specific

steps to improve their economic relations, to facilitate critical infrastructure and assistance projects, and to avoid unilateral actions that could undermine the resumption of negotiations. The donor community also pledged increased assistance to the Palestinians, including in support of the Government's COVID-19 vaccination effort.

Humanitarian concerns in Gaza persisted. Due to a lack of funding, there continued to be a serious shortage of medical supplies in Gaza's health system, including essential drugs.

UNRWA narrowly avoided a financial collapse at the end 2020, at a time of acute needs in the Palestine refugee community. This year, UNRWA faces a financial shortfall of more than USD 200 million for its core programme budget. By April, the Agency will face a serious cash flow crisis. After years of austerity measures and investment in efficiency, the Agency has reached its limits. It must receive additional funding to sustain all essential services and support national plans to contain the pandemic, including vaccination roll-out. Funding shortfalls facing WFP and UNRWA may also impact food distribution across the OPT in the coming months, if not addressed by donors.

On 9 February, Egypt reopened the Rafah Crossing in both directions until further notice. On 31 January, the Government of Qatar announced it had significantly increased its financial contribution to Gaza. It concluded, *inter alia*, an agreement with UNOPS through the end of 2021 to provide fuel to the Gaza Power Plant that will generate over twelve hours of stable supply of electricity per day.

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 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."

On 11 January and 11 March, the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, France, Germany and Jordan met in Cairo and Paris, respectively, to discuss ways to advance the Middle East Peace Process, including through collective efforts with the Middle East Quartet.

On 21 December, the United States Congress passed legislation that allocates USD 250 million over five years for programmes that "help build the foundation for peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians and for a sustainable two-state solution."

On 23 December, 15 February and 23 March, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met virtually to discuss the latest political developments and the situation on the ground. All agreed to meet on a regular basis to continue their engagement.

On 8 February, the League of Arab States issued a statement reiterating its support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In closing, I would like to share some broad observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of UN resolution 2334 during the reporting period.

1. I am deeply concerned by continued Israeli settlement expansion, particularly into highly sensitive areas, which entrench the Israeli occupation, erode the possibility of a contiguous, independent and viable Palestinian State and further threaten the prospect of achieving a two-State solution. I reiterate that settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law. I urge Israel to cease the advancement of all settlement activity immediately.

2. We have witnessed a spike in demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures, which include internationally funded humanitarian projects. I urge Israel to cease demolitions and evictions, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and to approve plans that would enable these communities to build legally and address their development needs.

3. COVID-19 continues to have a devastating effect on Palestinians. In addition to the brutal impact on public health, the recurrent lockdowns, school closures, and reduction of commercial activity have severely undermined living conditions. In view of these challenges, I commend the Palestinian Government's efforts to plan and implement its vaccination campaign. UN agencies, in particular WHO, UNICEF, UNRWA and their partners will continue to support vaccination efforts. Israeli facilitation of vaccine deliveries remains essential, and I appreciate this cooperation. Support to the Palestinian COVID-19 response should be significantly enhanced to ensure that Palestinians throughout the OPT receive a fair and timely share of the distribution of vaccines.

4. By every measure, 2020 was a year of setbacks for the Palestinians, for their institutions, and their economy. Yet we begin 2021 with a degree of guarded optimism. The restart of coordination between Israel and the PA places the Palestinian Government in a more solid fiscal position and could portend greater communication between the sides on a variety of critical issues. Despite an increase in infections in the West Bank, since early February, vaccines have begun arriving in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, one of the earliest middle-income countries to receive shipments of COVID-19 vaccines. This is a critical first step towards recovery and a more sustainable re-opening of the economy. I welcome the commitment shown by donors at the February AHLC meeting to supporting Palestinian efforts to respond to and recover from the pandemic. I reiterate my call on Israel to increase the number of permits for Palestinian workers and I call on both sides to address outstanding fiscal files and issues related to corresponding banking relations.

5. Nevertheless, I remain concerned by the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. The threat of another major escalation has not disappeared. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism remains critical to facilitate reconstruction, as well as vital infrastructure projects to bolster Gaza's water and energy networks. However, humanitarian and economic support, alone, will not overcome Gaza's challenges. It is vital that Hamas and other factions end militant activity and the military build-up. Taking into consideration its legitimate security concerns, I urge Israel to ease the restrictions on the movement of goods and people to and from Gaza, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), with the goal of ultimately lifting them. Only by fully lifting the debilitating closures can we hope to sustainably resolve the humanitarian crisis.

6. Palestinian unity is essential for progress, and free, fair and inclusive elections throughout Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem are a first step. I am encouraged by the steady advance toward the holding of Palestinian elections and urge the parties to carry on their dialogue and overcome remaining differences. The UN will continue to support the Palestinian

people, including through facilitating and supporting preparations for these important elections, which are crucial for renewing the legitimacy of national political institutions.

7. Let me underscore the criticality of preserving political space within, but not limited to, the context of elections. I call on authorities on all sides to ensure that political actors, civil society representatives and human rights defenders are able to exercise their democratic rights free from intimidation and threat.

8. Let me also welcome the important efforts of civil society organizations working towards peace. The significant new funding for these organizations approved by the U.S. Congress is a crucial vote of confidence at a challenging moment and a positive signal of renewed support to the search for peace in Israel and Palestine. I encourage additional Member States to continue and to increase their assistance for these activities.

9. I am deeply concerned by the daily violence that continues to fuel mistrust and drives us further from a peaceful resolution of the conflict. I am particularly concerned that children are so often the victims. Children should never be the target of violence by any party, nor be exposed to violence. I reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Pertinent authorities must carry out thorough, independent, impartial and prompt investigations into all instances of possible excessive use of force. Settler-related violence also remains of great concern, and I urge Israel to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian population, in line with its responsibilities under international law. I underscore that all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice.

10. I also emphasize that there can be no justification for any act of terrorism, which must be unequivocally condemned by all. Likewise, the launching of indiscriminate rockets and incendiary devices towards Israeli population centers violates international law and must stop.

11. I would like to reiterate that the fate of the two Israeli civilians and the bodies of the two Israel Defense Forces soldiers held by Hamas in Gaza remains an important humanitarian concern. I call upon Hamas to provide full information related to their condition, as required by international humanitarian law. I also remain deeply concerned at the continued Israeli practice of holding the bodies of killed Palestinians and call on Israel to return withheld bodies to their families in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

12. I remain seriously concerned by UNRWA's financial situation. UNRWA is not only a lifeline for millions of Palestine refugees, but also critical for regional stability. Collective support of UNRWA and common responsibility for its funding are essential for its sustainability and a critical element for regional stability.

13. At the same time, humanitarian partners continue their efforts to assist the 1.8 million most vulnerable Palestinians, including 1.4 million in Gaza, through targeted assistance and programming. To date, only 21 percent of the USD 417 million OPT Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded. I encourage donors to consider additional support for 2021 to avoid further deterioration.

In closing, the COVID-19 pandemic remains a very real threat to the health, security and prosperity of Palestinians and Israelis alike. A collective, robust approach is crucial to tackling this deadly adversary and rebuilding the lives and livelihoods of all those impacted by the virus.

The Palestinian election process continues with a successful voter registration exercise. The finalization of electoral lists and candidates is ongoing. The international community must continue, throughout the process, to support Palestinian efforts to restore democracy and legitimacy to their national institutions. This includes the deployment of observation missions despite COVID-19 challenges.

Finally, I remain committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States. This means Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. I reiterate my call to the members of the Middle East Quartet, key Arab and international partners, as well as to Israeli and Palestinian leadership, to strengthen efforts to return to meaningful negotiations towards a viable two-State solution.

X. SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES URGES ISRAEL TO FACILITATE COVID-19 VACCINES IN OPT

On 25 March 2021, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories issued the following [statement](#).

After recent annual consultations with Member States, the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices* today expressed deep concern over reports that Israel, while donating surplus COVID-19 vaccines overseas, has failed to fulfill its international legal responsibility and obligation to ensure the vaccination of the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory. The number of vaccines received so far by the Palestinian people represents only a ‘drop in the sea’, in addressing the overall vaccination needs and containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against this background, the Special Committee calls on Israel, as an occupying power, to urgently comply with its international legal obligations, to ensure that Palestinians and Syrians under occupation have access to available vaccines, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention.