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

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

## **Identical letters dated 5 May 2021 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council**

The situation in Occupied Palestine continues to worsen as Israel intensifies its human rights violations and war crimes against the Palestinian people. In particular, the occupying Power has escalated its confiscation of Palestinian homes, lands and properties, seeking to accelerate the forced transfer of Palestinian civilians and its settlement colonization schemes, especially in areas in and around occupied East Jerusalem. It is beyond apparent by now that this is all part of a systematic, deliberate plan to remove Palestinians – in other words, ethnically cleanse these areas – in preparation for annexation.

Numerous letters have been sent to the Security Council in recent months drawing attention to these violations, including the plight of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem, who face the constant threat of eviction from their homes and mass dispossession, like so many before them in the City, amid Israel's unlawful measures to replace them with Israeli settlers. As of today in Sheikh Jarrah, 169 Palestinians – including 46 children – have nowhere to go as Israel intensifies its intimidation by the judiciary and attacks on Palestinian families in and around Jerusalem with the sole intent of consolidating Israeli control of the City by illegally altering its demographic composition, character and status.

We once again draw urgent attention to this crisis, appealing to the international community to act to bring a halt to Israel's illegal actions and to protect Palestinian civilians from the crimes of the occupying Power, a protection they are entitled to under international humanitarian law. Accountability measures are the only recourse for upholding the law, deterring further crimes, including the uprooting of hundreds more Palestinian families, and salvaging the dimming prospects for a just peace.

The fact is that Israel's coercive dispossession campaigns in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan and elsewhere throughout Occupied Palestine are no aberration. Uprooting Palestinians and replacing them with Israeli settlers is part of the ongoing Nakba faced



by countless Palestinian families, those who are presently being forcibly displaced, some for the second or third time, and those who continue to be denied their inalienable right of return to their homes and lands. In the absence of accountability, Israel has just pressed on with its illegal plans without consequence.

The occupying Power is blatantly using unlawful measures to carry out its widespread and systemic policy of forced displacement, including using its judiciary and applying settler-backed laws to occupied territory. These illegal actions are being carried out in countless ways every single day in grave breach of international humanitarian and criminal law and in violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and including the specific prohibitions on policies and measures aimed at altering the character, demographic composition and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to belligerent occupation, prohibits the transfer of an occupying Power's civilian population to an occupied territory, as well as individual or mass forcible transfers, including deportations of protected persons from occupied territory. The July 2004 ruling of the International Court of Justice in this regard was also patently clear and continues to be disregarded and disrespected by Israel.

In addition to losing their homes, Palestinian Jerusalemites are unable to challenge the occupation's unlawful decisions and measures, as the draconian legal process is deliberately set up to be exhausting and unaffordable for Palestinians. The settler groups driving the current eviction plans, "Ateret Cohanim" and "Nahalat Shimon", are infamous for having successfully expelled Palestinian families from Jerusalem in the past, with the complete backing of the Israeli government.

Today, over 1,500 Palestinians in Jerusalem face the threat of forced displacement and home demolitions to make way for an illegal settlement called "Shimon Hatzadik", along with a park – "King David Park" – for settlers. While these settler groups enjoy the backing and services of Israeli courts and legislation for their unlawful plans, Palestinian families face relentless attacks designed to amass as much Palestinian land as possible, with as few Palestinian civilians as possible, and to keep the occupation in place, highlighting the degree to which one group is heavily prioritized over another through a two-tier system built on discrimination and oppression.

In January 2021, Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk warned the international community of the impact and agenda behind Israel's forced displacement campaign in Jerusalem. Mr. Lynk stressed, inter alia: "The eviction orders are not random but appear to be strategically focused on an area in East Jerusalem known as the Historic Basin. They seem to be aimed at clearing the way for the establishment of more illegal Israeli settlements in the area and physically segregating and fragmenting East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank."

Mohammed El-Kurd, whose family is among those set to be forcefully evicted in May, said: "What we are witnessing in Sheikh Jarrah is Israel's attempt to erase the Palestinian presence from our native city in real time. This fate of dispossession looms over much of my neighbourhood. Our lives are consumed by the anxiety of living on the brink of homelessness."

On 27 April 2021, Human Rights Watch released a lengthy and detailed report concluding that the crimes of apartheid and persecution are being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Human Rights Watch concluded, inter alia, that "the Israeli government has demonstrated an intent to maintain the domination of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians across Israel and the OPT. In the OPT, including East Jerusalem, that intent has been coupled with systematic oppression of Palestinians and inhumane acts committed against them. When these three elements occur together, they amount to the crime of apartheid".

Although the Palestinian people reached this conclusion decades ago as they endured the occupation's systemic oppression, mass dispossession, land expropriation, settlement encroachment, endless collective punishment and other grave breaches of international law, such conclusions are part of a growing international consensus asserting that Israel is an apartheid state since a "threshold has already been crossed in certain of the areas where Israeli authorities exercise control," as stressed by the Human Rights Watch report, *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*.

The report follows similar findings by Palestinian, Israeli and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which address and flag the horrific reality of ethnic supremacy being practised by Israel over Palestinians. In January, Israeli NGO B'Tselem released a report that contradicted Israel's portrayal of a so-called thriving democracy, asserting that Israel is an apartheid regime. As stressed by B'Tselem, "One organizing principle lies at the base of a wide array of Israeli policies: advancing and perpetuating the supremacy of one group – Jews – over another – Palestinians."

Another Israeli NGO, Yesh Din, has concluded: "For years, Israel has used the state of occupation as mere temporary suspension of sovereignty and civil rights as an alibi when confronted with accusations that the crime of apartheid was being committed in the West Bank. Its manifest, deliberate policy of dispossession, settlement and creeping annexation, both on the ground and in the legal realm, gives away its intent to cement its control and perpetuate the suspension of sovereignty and Palestinians' rights – and with that, shatters its alibi."

Evictions and home demolitions are an integral part of this illegal Israeli policy. The trajectory of the demolitions indicates that such policies will only intensify, as Israel seeks to further clear Palestinian land of its inhabitants for seizure to implement its illegal settlement plans. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack occupation-issued building permits, placing over 90,000 Palestinian residents at risk of displacement. As repeatedly stated by United Nations Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland, Israeli-issued permits are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain. This is attested by Human Rights Watch in its report, which stressed the following:

[Israeli] authorities approved less than 1.5 per cent of applications by Palestinians to build between 2016 and 2018 – 21 in total – a figure 100 times smaller than the number of demolition orders it issued in the same period, according to official data. Israeli authorities have razed thousands of Palestinian properties in these areas for lacking a permit, leaving thousands of families displaced. By contrast, according to Peace Now, Israeli authorities began construction on more than 23,696 housing units between 2009 and 2020 in Israeli settlements in Area C. Transfer of an occupying power's civilian population to an occupied territory violates the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Further exposing Israel's intent to maintain its illegal occupation – in flagrant disregard of the international community's calls to bring it to an end – is its deprivation of fundamental rights that many across the world take for granted. Just this week, the decision was taken to postpone Palestinian elections due to Israel's repression of Palestinian participation in occupied East Jerusalem. From arresting candidates to suppressing election-related events, Israel continues to breach previous agreements by cherry-picking what it likes and dislikes, according to what serves the entrenchment of the occupation at the expense of the Palestinian people's rights, including the right to self-determination.

In this regard, we reiterate our calls on the international community to exert the necessary pressure to end Israel's disruption of Palestine's elections, particularly in

occupied East Jerusalem, and demand an end to all its other illegal actions aimed at undermining and impeding Palestinian presence and life in the City, including their freedom of worship, as witnessed in recent obstructions of the worship of Palestinian Muslims at Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan and Palestinian Christians during their recent Easter celebrations.

As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs put it: “Other Israeli policies have negatively affected Palestinians’ ability to plan and develop their communities and enjoy the services they are entitled to, further undermining their presence in the city. In addition, Israeli measures have increasingly cut off East Jerusalem, once the focus of political, commercial, religious and cultural life for the entire Palestinian population of the occupied Palestinian territory, from the rest of the West Bank and from the Gaza Strip.”

Faced with these realities, the international community must reject Israel’s attempts to taint legitimate criticism of Israel’s crimes by delegitimizing human rights groups and even delegitimizing the real accounts of human suffering on the ground. International law is clear as to the gravity of the violations being perpetrated by the occupying Power. The international community must equally condemn the weaponization of anti-Semitism just as we collectively condemn all forms of anti-Semitism, which has culminated in one of the greatest tragedies of our time. This has become a systematic policy that has even targeted Security Council members, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and other international figures, who – in upholding their moral, legal, political and/or humanitarian obligations – dare to denounce Israel’s violations of the Palestinian people’s rights and its colonization of their land. We all need to fight anti-Semitism while rejecting the instrumentalization of the accusation of anti-Semitism to shield illegal actions from criticism and accountability.

For decades, the international community has been persistently warned about the magnitude of Israel’s grave crimes and violations across the years of its 54-year foreign occupation. Today, Israel’s institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination has resulted in the devastating reality that prevails: apartheid. Standing alone in deliberately misinterpreting international law, Israel remains unmoved, owing to the lack of action to ensure accountability and justice. The international community, particularly the Security Council, can – and must – make it clear to Israel that the situation it has deliberately created will have serious consequences if not rectified in accordance with its clear obligations under international law.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 712 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 26 April 2021 (A/ES-10/858-S/2021/403) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

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

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