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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 26 April 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

I must urgently draw the international community's attention to the critical situation facing the Palestinian people as Israel, the occupying Power, escalates its illegal policies and practices in tandem with the rising lawlessness and impunity it has cultivated among the most extreme elements of its population, particularly the settlers it has illegally transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Abetted and emboldened by the government, Israeli occupying forces and mobs of extremists have intensified their systemic, violent and racist attacks and incitement against Palestinians in ongoing attempts to entrench the occupation and de facto annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in East Jerusalem. These acts of aggression have become a nightly occurrence since the start of the holy month of Ramadan, with hundreds of Palestinians injured and arrested by Israeli occupying forces.

The massive deployment of occupation forces in and around Jerusalem's Old City, the prevention of the right to worship, including to access the Haram al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and ongoing eviction campaigns against Palestinian families in the City are the latest violations to add to Israel's long list of grave breaches of international law and Security Council resolutions. In addition to these provocative measures, Palestinians in Jerusalem are reeling from nights of organized incitement and terror by extremist groups that have included violent marches through the City by hundreds of Jewish extremists chanting anti-Palestinian slogans and threats, including "Death to Arabs" and "May Palestinian villages burn".

Emboldened by the routine incitement spouted by many extremist politicians, including in the latest Israeli election campaign, youth assailants belonging to the "Lehava" Jewish supremacist group set up roadblocks to violently intercept Palestinian vehicles as Israeli forces stood idly by. Such state-sponsored incitement and violence openly contradict the defamatory remarks made by the Israeli representative



against Palestinian families and their children during last week's Security Council debate on the Palestine question. Such hateful and racist comments against an entire nation of people – a method long used by Israel to dehumanize and demean the Palestinian people whom it is subjecting to occupation and oppression – have no place in the Security Council or in any civilized discourse, and must be condemned and rejected.

Furthermore, directly linked to this culture of impunity and supremacy fostered by the occupation are the rampant acts of settler violence throughout Occupied Palestine, including intimidation, harassment and attacks on civilians, seizure of Palestinian homes and the destruction of crops, along with the deliberate demolition of homes and military raids by the occupying army, which have intensified in recent weeks. In a statement on 14 April, United Nations special rapporteurs warned that settler violence had increased dramatically in recent months without Israeli occupation forces taking the necessary steps to stem the violence and uphold international law, including the obligation to protect the occupied population.

The special rapporteurs stressed, *inter alia*: “We are deeply worried by the atmosphere of impunity in which these attacks are taking place. In many cases, the Israeli military has been present, or nearby, and has not taken sufficient steps to protect the Palestinians from this violence. This amounts to a discriminatory two-tier approach to military protection and policing in the West Bank.” For instance, in one incident highlighted by the special rapporteurs which took place in Al-Khalil (Hebron) on 13 March, a Palestinian family – parents and their eight children – were attacked by 10 Israeli settlers, some of them armed. The injured parents were treated at a medical facility and the children were left traumatized.

As spring is of key economic and cultural importance for Palestinians with regard to the harvest, settler attacks on agricultural fields and farmlands have also soared. On 12 April, Israeli settlers used heavy machinery to raze agricultural fields belonging to Palestinian families in the village of Jalud, near Nablus. On 19 April, settlers bulldozed farmlands belonging to the Bedouin community of Khirbat Tall al-Himmah. This latest attack is another attempt by settlers to uproot the Palestinian residents with the aim of replacing them with illegal settler outposts. On 21 April, occupying forces once again escorted extremist Israeli settlers as they stormed the archaeological site of Sabastiyah, near Nablus, also damaging nearby fields and preventing Palestinian farmers from accessing lands.

Israel's systematic policy of forced displacement through home demolitions and forced evictions also persists unabated, as the occupation accelerates its colonial settlement and annexation drive absent any attempts to stop them, and the international community continues to fail to uphold its responsibilities and obligations in this regard, as per international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

On 12 April, Israeli occupation forces demolished a Palestinian home in Bayt Sahur, near Bethlehem. On the same day, occupation forces destroyed residential tents and seized electric generators in Masafer Yatta, a collection of almost 19 hamlets near Al-Khalil, which rely heavily on farming and livestock as the main sources of livelihood. On 20 April, a Palestinian family in the Jabal al-Mukabbir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem was forced to self-demolish their home to avoid the heavy demolition fees punitively imposed by the occupation. On the same day, occupation authorities issued demolition orders against 13 Palestinian homes in Qabalan, near Nablus.

Palestinian homes and structures continue to be demolished and seized under the pretext that they lack occupation-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. According to the Israeli non-governmental

organization (NGO) Breaking the Silence, Israel has rejected nearly 99 per cent of Palestinian building permit applications over the years. Moreover, according to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, since 1967, Israeli occupation authorities have demolished more than 26,000 Palestinian-owned homes and structures.

Palestinian children have also endured rising waves of attacks by Israeli occupation forces, which regularly resort to excessive use of lethal force against an unarmed civilian population. On 9 April, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy lost his eye after Israeli soldiers indiscriminately fired rubber-tipped steel bullets into a crowd in Al-Khalil. In a video widely shared on news networks and social media, the boy, Izz al-Din Al-Batsh, can be seen standing in a vegetable shop with his cousin as he is struck in the eye. With a metal core surrounded by a rubber coating, the projectiles are “less lethal” than live fire, but possess the capability to kill, maim, cripple and blind, as detailed in the tragic case of Izz al-Din, who will suffer life-long disability like so many other Palestinian children and adults wounded by the occupation army’s cruelty and recklessness.

Israel also persists with its torture and ill-treatment of the Palestinians it is holding captive in its prisons and detention centres. While this has seemingly been normalized by the occupying Power, this 54-year-old policy and practice of mass arbitrary arrests and extreme abuse of the Palestinian civilian population, particularly males and including children, must be addressed as the grave violations of international law they constitute.

Palestinians face a more than 99 per cent conviction rate in Israeli military courts, which are a central mechanism designed to dehumanize the Palestinian people and criminalize their presence on their land and their legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination. As of today, more than 4,400 Palestinians, including 37 women and 140 children, are being arbitrarily held in Israeli jails, and 440 Palestinians are being held in administrative detention, without charge or trial, based on “evidence” that is not accessible either to the detainees or their lawyers.

In this regard, I must bring to your attention the case of Mansour Shahateet, who was forcibly kept in solitary confinement during the majority of his unlawful 17-year sentence. Shahateet was released nearly three weeks ago and suffers from psychological and neurological diseases stemming from years of severe torture and beatings, which have prevented him from recognizing his family, including his own mother. According to Palestinian NGO Addameer, there has never been any individual or agency held accountable for the well-documented crimes of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and interrogation centres. Moreover, according to Amnesty International, to this day, torture is not criminalized under Israeli law, enabling the torture and abuse of Palestinians in Israeli captivity.

Since the occupation began in 1967, Israel has held tens of thousands of Palestinians in administrative detention without charge or trial. Israel’s notorious policy of mass arbitrary detention is among many other illegal, inhumane and immoral policies aimed at intimidating and repressing the civilian population and entrenching its colonial occupation. Human Rights Watch has noted: “Israel’s regular use of administrative detention, at the least, inverts international law and turns the exception into the norm, at the cost of the fundamental right to due process.” Recalling his first report to the General Assembly in 2017, Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk called on Israel to comply with international law and standards for detention, underscoring that “Israel’s use of administrative detention is not in compliance with the extremely limited circumstances in which it is allowed under international humanitarian law, and deprives detainees of basic legal safeguards guaranteed by international human rights law.”

Such blatant and systematic violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, along with the repeated and documented violations of international humanitarian law, make it ever more urgent for the Security Council to engage on the Palestine question in a practical and proactive manner. Salvaging the potential for a future of peace, stability and justice depends on this. The cumulative effects of Israel's 54-year belligerent occupation of Palestine and its decades of dispossession of Palestinians and denial of their rights, including the rights of the Palestine refugees to return and to restitution, have led to an unjust and coercive situation that the international community can no longer ignore and must not in any way assist in maintaining. Upholding international law and maintaining peace and security must be at the top of the Security Council's agenda, and Palestine must not be the exception. Until serious, concrete action is taken, Israel will remain unmoved, persisting with its crimes against our people with absolute impunity.

It is more urgent than ever to end the Security Council's paralysis, which has allowed this illegal occupation to thrive rather than bringing it to an end, as repeatedly demanded by the international community in accordance with the rule of law and the principles of human decency. International law and the Security Council's mandate provide tools and mechanisms for measures to hold Israel accountable, and for finally bringing an end to its occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and promoting the realization of justice and peace, making them a reality, not only words in lofty statements.

It is well known that the years and decades of inaction in this regard have not only gravely harmed the Palestinian people but have also detrimentally impacted the very foundations of international law and the credibility of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. What the world sees is that, despite clear and systematic violations of international law, Israel has not been held accountable. If anything, it has been rewarded and increasingly emboldened by the status quo. Israel has believed it can commit evermore violations and pursue evermore criminal policies at zero cost to its international standing and relations. This obscenely unjust situation must end. The international community, including the Security Council, is not being asked to resort to extraordinary lengths to hold Israel accountable, but to simply have the will to respect and follow through on existing frameworks and rules of international law aimed at ending this historic injustice and the longest belligerent occupation in modern history, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, most recently Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

The present letter is in follow-up to our 711 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 14 April 2021 ([A/ES-10/857-S/2021/366](#)) 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