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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 6 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

I am compelled to write again in immediate follow-up to my previous communication as tensions and violence in Occupied Palestine further escalate, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, as Israel, the occupying Power, and its extremist settlers intensify their attacks against Palestinian civilians and persist with attempts to strip Palestinian families of their homes and ethnically cleanse them from Jerusalem.

The international community must act with urgency to bring a halt to these crimes, avert further deterioration of this fragile and dangerous situation and save human lives. The responsibility of the Security Council in this regard is patently clear.

On the same day of my previous letter, on 5 May 2021, a young Palestinian boy, Said Yussef Odeh, 16 years of age, was killed by the Israeli occupying forces, who shot him twice in his back when he was at the entrance to his village of Odala, south of the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank. Said, who was a student and an aspiring football player who had his Palestinian national team identification card with him at the time he was shot, was then left to die of his wounds as the soldiers prevented paramedics from treating him for at least 15 minutes. By the time he was taken to hospital, the young boy was pronounced dead upon arrival, another innocent life taken, another Palestinian family devastated by this illegal colonial occupation.

Also this week, Israeli occupying forces killed a Palestinian woman, Fahima al-Hroub, age 60, near a checkpoint in Bethlehem. While the occupation authorities allege it was an attack, video footage shows that at no point was she close enough to pose a lethal threat to the soldiers who were armed to the hilt and yet proceeded to shoot her to death in broad daylight.

Against this backdrop of rising tensions, Palestinian protests also continue in occupied East Jerusalem. Demonstrations and vigils are being held nightly in solidarity with the Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, who



remain under the threat of eviction from their homes by Israeli settler organizations and the Israeli court, which is equally complicit in these crimes.

These peaceful, non-violent protests continue to be met with brutal repression by the Israeli occupying forces and with violent attacks by extremist settlers, who have been emboldened by the Israeli court and by Israeli Government officials, who continue to incite and provoke with their inflammatory rhetoric. This includes the extremist, far-right Knesset member, Itamar Ben Gvir, who has repeatedly called for the transfer of Palestinians and who has provocatively “set up his office” in the middle of Sheikh Jarrah to stake claim to the area. It is the height of cruelty and absurdity that, while entire Palestinian families face the risk of being uprooted from their homes and their lives torn apart, it is they and those in solidarity with them who are being attacked, injured and arrested by the occupying forces, while Israeli settlers roam about freely, intimidating and attacking civilians, including children, and vandalizing Palestinian homes and properties.

Israeli forces have been raiding Sheikh Jarrah night after night, assaulting residents and solidarity protesters, arresting them, spraying them with skunk water (a chemically enhanced sewage water), and using tear gas and sound bombs. Among the Palestinians arrested have been Tala Obeid, Omar al-Khatib and Mahmoud Nabil al-Kurd, whose families face imminent displacement from their homes in East Jerusalem as Israeli settlers and the Israeli Government continue attempts to ethnically cleanse the City’s Palestinian neighbourhoods and take them over in a criminal drive to assert control and sovereignty.

In this regard, it must be noted that half of the al-Kurd family home was already overtaken by Israeli settlers in 2009. Mohammed al-Kurd, who was only 11 years old when the settlers forced their way in, has been among those protesting the Israeli court’s decision to allow the settlers to evict his family from the home they have been living in for generations. Speaking of this reality and their constant harassment by the settlers, Mohammed has said: “They are just sitting in our home, tormenting us, harassing us, doing everything they can to not only force us to leave the second half of our home but also harassing our neighbours into leaving their homes as part of an effort to completely annihilate the presence of Palestinians from Jerusalem.”

In response to the Israeli court’s decision, the families have issued a statement rejecting that decision and stressing: “The inherently unjust system of Israel’s colonial courts is not considering questioning the illegal settler’s ownership and has already decided on the families’ dispossession.”

Faced with this unjust situation and the threat of yet another displacement, following the uprooting from their homes in historic Palestine in 1948, they seek the protection of international law. On 22 April 2021, representatives of 28 Palestinian families constituting approximately 500 Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and 191 endorsing organizations sent a letter to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, calling on the Office to urgently include the imminent forced displacement of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah as part of the investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine, with specific regard to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including forcible transfer, appropriation of property, persecution, apartheid and other inhumane acts causing great suffering arising from their forced evictions.

The fact is that Israel launched this policy of transfer of Palestinians from East Jerusalem almost immediately after occupying the remainder of the City in 1967. Land expropriation for Israeli settlements began as early as 1968 around East Jerusalem and in the heart of Palestinian neighbourhoods such as the Old City’s Muslim and Christian Quarters and in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Ras al-Amoud and Abu Tur. It is a policy that continues to this day, blatantly and aggressively, aimed at

entrenching Israel's presence, occupation and control in East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Since 1967, Israel has revoked the residency rights of more than 14,200 Palestinians, uprooting thousands of families from East Jerusalem. These measures coincide with its aggressive practice of home demolitions and forced evictions, which have not stopped even in a time of pandemic, deliberately rendering hundreds more families homeless and even more vulnerable. Moreover, the occupying Power continues to use all means of legislative and administrative "measures" to advance its illegal schemes. As cautioned in a joint alert issued on 4 May 2021 by the Israeli human rights organizations Ir Amim and Bimkom: "For the first time in 53 years, Israel has underhandedly begun land registration procedures in East Jerusalem, exclusively registering land rights of properties to alleged Jewish owners without the public's knowledge. Such a move is unprecedented and has potential acute ramifications on Palestinian properties across East Jerusalem, which could ultimately lead to widespread Palestinian dispossession in the city."

The international community cannot remain paralysed in the face of these blatant crimes. As stated by Human Rights Watch in its recent report on Israeli apartheid, "The international community has for too long explained away and turned a blind eye to the increasingly transparent reality on the ground."

It is high time for international action, particularly by the Security Council, using the means and measures afforded by international law to finally hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its violations and crimes against the Palestinian people. It is time to cease any support for this illegal occupation and cease the preferential treatment that has for so long exempted Israel from its obligation to respect the law like all other countries in the world. We thus repeat our appeal for responsible international action to protect human lives and human dignity and to uphold the law for the sake of justice and peace.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 713 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 5 May 2021 ([A/ES-10/859-S/2021/430](#)), 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