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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 11 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 must again draw urgent attention to the escalating aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, in Occupied Palestine, which is causing immense human suffering and aggravating tensions, risking further destabilization of this volatile situation, which poses a threat to international peace and security.

Yesterday, 10 May, against the backdrop of the heightened tensions and worsening situation in occupied East Jerusalem as a result of intensifying Israeli incitement and violence against Palestinian civilians and holy sites, the Israeli occupying forces began a military aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip. Israeli air strikes have thus far killed 27 Palestinians, including 9 children and 1 woman, in Gaza. This military aggression is traumatizing an already beleaguered population of 2 million people who have been imprisoned by Israel's illegal blockade for 14 years, suffering its inhumane impact on all aspects of life, and who are now once again under siege, vulnerable to the occupation's military machine and deprived of the protection that they desperately need and that they are entitled to under international humanitarian law. There can be no justification whatsoever for such indiscriminate attacks on a civilian population.

Since my previous letter to you, the situation in occupied East Jerusalem has also deteriorated at all levels as Israeli violence, incitement and provocation have reached new heights, with both Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers rampaging through the City and its holy sites, inflaming tensions and sensitivities in this holy Muslim month of Ramadan. Yesterday, 10 May, occupying forces carried out a deliberate, fully fledged raid at Al-Haram Al-Sharif as part of an attempt to escort mobs of settler extremists in a so-called "parade" to mark the anniversary of Israel's illegal occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967.

Occupying forces raided Al-Aqsa Mosque, surrounding and indiscriminately firing at defenceless worshippers and bystanders. More than 300 Palestinians were injured by the firing of rubber-coated metal bullets, by concussion grenades, tear gas



canisters and sound bombs, and in direct physical attacks carried out by the Israeli occupying forces. Occupying forces even locked Palestinian worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque while desecrating the holy site with a barrage of incendiary and toxic agents, including grenades and acrid smoke. More than 80 of the injured have been hospitalized and several are in critical condition. Most injuries were sustained to the upper body – face, eyes, head and chest. Israeli forces also obstructed medics from reaching the injured and assaulted journalists and medical personnel. Dozens of other Palestinian civilians were wounded elsewhere throughout the occupied West Bank by the excessive force used by the Israeli occupying forces against civilians protesting Israel's aggressions on Al-Aqsa and the imminent evictions of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

The international community, particularly the Security Council, must condemn all of Israel's illegal actions and must demand that the attacks against civilians stop and that all illegal measures aimed at altering the character, demographic composition and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem stop, including all violations of the historic and legal status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In this regard, we again recall Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), by which the Council unequivocally condemned "all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions".

That Israel, the occupying Power, behaves in such an inhumane and rogue manner, violating international law and human rights with impunity, is not new. Every year, Ramadan in Palestine is tarnished by Israel's flagrant and deliberate crimes and violations against the Palestinian people, including the killing and injury of civilians, home demolitions, forced displacement, the desecration of holy sites and vile, violent attacks by settler extremists who have become only more emboldened in recent years by the Israeli government and its occupying forces.

These past days, in coordination with occupying forces, mobs of settlers have repeatedly stormed the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, attacking residents, intimidating them with hateful and racist slurs and threats, and preventing them from accessing their homes. Unsurprisingly, the latest round of settler incitement was led by Israeli politicians and members of parliament, including Arie King, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, with the aim of provoking Palestinian residents facing forced evictions that are purposely aimed at consolidating Israel's colonial settler presence in occupied East Jerusalem as part of the long-running plans to forcibly and artificially alter the City's demography in favour of a Jewish majority.

Sheikh Jarrah's alarming situation has attracted a range of State-backed settler groups determined to uproot Palestinians from their homes, with these extremist groups reinforcing Israeli government plans to entrench the occupation and Israel's illegal control of the Palestinian land, with as few Palestinians as possible, thereby facilitating its illegal annexation schemes. This is being done through all unlawful means and measures, including through the Israeli "judiciary", whose decisions overwhelmingly favour Israeli settlers and are part and parcel of the occupying Power's systematic forced displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people. As stated by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem concerning Sheikh Jarrah: "The issue today is not a matter of a real-estate dispute between private parties. It is rather an attempt driven by an extremist ideology which denies the right of existence of a person in his own home."

Disturbing footage has shown settlers, escorted by police and occupying forces, marching through Sheikh Jarrah chanting “mavet la’aravim” – “Death to the Arabs” – and other hateful, racist slogans. Over consecutive nights as Palestinian, Israeli and international activists gathered in solidarity with Palestinian families facing forced displacement, occupying forces used violent force against peaceful demonstrators. According to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, 17 people were seriously injured due to the excessive use of force. Among others, an Amnesty International report on 10 May has corroborated field documentation of Israel’s brutal repression of civilians peacefully protesting forced displacement in occupied East Jerusalem, with occupying forces deliberately instigating chaos and violence and causing harm to the protesters.

Israeli forces also continue their arbitrary arrests of Palestinians peacefully demonstrating against this illegal occupation and standing in defence of the Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah and their rights. Among the many arrested was Mariam Afifi, a member of the Palestine Youth Orchestra, who was captured on video being beaten and dragged by her hijab by an Israeli soldier and then taken away. While handcuffed on the side of the road, Mariam asked the soldier, “Do you want your kids to grow up defending the oppressors?” This question must be asked throughout the international community, including in the Security Council, as Israeli impunity rages unabated owing to the lack of accountability, destroying yet another generation and destroying any prospect for peace and stability.

International law and accountability mechanisms are impeded today by attempts of false equivocation that deliberately conceal and/or ignore the reality created by Israel’s 54-year belligerent occupation: mass dispossession, systemic discrimination, demographic engineering, forced displacement and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people and even their very existence in their homeland. For too long, many have championed the rights and liberties of oppressed peoples worldwide, but fallen short on applying the same rights and principles to the Palestinian people.

The continued paralysis of the Security Council on the situation in Palestine is unacceptable. The long-running practice of exceptionalizing Israel at the Security Council has been too costly, only fuelling impunity at the cost of human lives, human rights and the prospects for peace and security and hastening the disintegration of the rule of law. The time is past due to question such historic errors by choosing a different path that holds all States to the same standards of moral conduct based on the principles of justice and dignity and of not favouring or privileging one over the other. That is the basis of true justice.

The Security Council must uphold its Charter duty to maintain international peace and security without exception, including in the case of Palestine. We therefore once again call on the Security Council to act with urgency to address this crisis and deepening injustice. The Council cannot allow its resolutions to be so grossly and systematically violated without consequence and cannot allow the situation in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, to spiral out of control.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 714 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 6 May 2021 (A/ES-10/860-S/2021/438) 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
