



# General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General  
20 May 2021

Original: English

General Assembly  
Tenth emergency special session  
Agenda item 5

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

Security Council  
Seventy-sixth year

## **Identical letters dated 15 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**

As Israel persists with its scorched-earth tactics in Occupied Palestine, I am compelled to again appeal for humanity, for responsibility and for urgent international action to stop this criminal military aggression and protect the Palestinian people, who have, for too long, suffered under this illegal occupation.

In the less than 24 hours since my last letter to you, the occupying Power has intensified its bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip, unleashed a wave of killings across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and emboldened terror attacks by its State-sponsored settler gangs and militias, leaving behind scores of dead and wounded and widespread destruction. Once again, the world is witness to crimes against humanity that it long ago pledged to never again let befall innocent civilians.

All of this is happening as the Palestinian people once more sombrely mark the anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophe they have endured since 1947/48, endlessly brutalized, dispossessed and uprooted from their homeland, with no end in sight to this historic injustice.

Some 140 Palestinians, including 39 children and 22 women, have been killed and more than 1,000 people have been injured, among them 254 children, and many critically wounded by the Israeli military assaults on Gaza since 11 May. Families continue to be devastated, among them seven family members who were killed in an Israeli air strike on Al-Shati refugee camp, only a two-month-old baby surviving this massacre, wounded and orphaned of his entire family.

At the start of this week, these people – children, women and men – were alive, awaiting Eid celebrations, resilient in their hope for better, more just days that never came, as now they are among the scores of dead and wounded left behind by Israel's deliberate onslaught on civilian areas, a war crime being perpetrated before the eyes of the world.



In the occupied West Bank, Israel's lethal force against civilian protesters has killed a total of 13 Palestinians in the past 24 hours. Palestinians also continue to be targeted in racist terror attacks by Israeli extremists, under the full protection of Israeli forces, knowing that they can get away with murder, gloating in the impunity long fostered by Israel against Palestinians. At this moment, Israeli settlers are rampaging through the Silwan neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem, threatening and attacking Palestinian families.

The numbers of persons displaced by this Israeli aggression also continues to climb, and is now estimated at more than 10,000 civilians. Once again, traumatized Palestinians have been forced to shelter in schools, mosques and even hospitals run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in the midst of an ongoing pandemic with limited access to water, food and health services, as Israeli warplanes and drones targeting Gaza, now joined by tank and cannon bombardment, have destroyed thousands of homes, flattened entire apartment buildings, as well as commercial buildings, including those housing journalists, and damaged other vital civilian infrastructure. There is no other option for refuge in Gaza, where there are no bomb shelters and where Israel's illegal land, air and sea blockade continues to imprison 2 million people in an act of massive collective punishment constituting a crime against humanity.

On 13 May, in one of Israel's most vicious bombardment campaigns, 160 Israeli warplanes fired 450 missiles in just 40 minutes. That is an average of 11 air strikes per minute, intentionally targeting a civilian area, reducing homes and neighbourhoods to rubble, with families in their entirety buried beneath flattened and burning buildings, the smell of death from charred and mutilated bodies pervading the area. How can anyone defend atrocities? How can anyone justify these war crimes? And yet, Israel, the occupying Power, is not held accountable to the same laws all countries in the world are obligated to respect.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli occupying forces used live ammunition and other lethal measures to attack protesters demonstrating against the aggression on Gaza, the imminent threat of the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem and Israeli attacks and provocations against Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. On 14 May, 11 Palestinians were killed in a single day across the occupied West Bank, owing to Israel's excessive use of lethal force against protesters. Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulances and medics raced back and forth transporting more than 500 Palestinians wounded by the firing of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, concussion grenades, tear gas canisters, sound bombs and direct physical attacks carried out by the Israeli occupying forces, with medics themselves coming under attack, all in grave violation of international humanitarian law.

Whether in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, or in the besieged Gaza Strip, the excessive and unwarranted use of lethal force paints a stark picture of Israel's disregard for Palestinian life. These acts are unjustifiable and indefensible, they are inhumane and illegal, and they are all part of a systematic policy deliberately designed to create a coercive environment through violence, repression and fear. Such rogue acts by Israel, the occupying Power, its occupying forces and settlers amount to war crimes, and the perpetrators of such wanton and deliberate terror, murder and destruction must be held accountable to the full extent of the law.

At the same time, violent and racist attacks continue to be perpetrated by extremist Israeli Jewish mobs against Palestinian citizens of Israel, further exacerbating this cycle of violence. In this regard, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has expressed concerns, inter alia, "that Israeli police failed to intervene where Palestinian citizens of Israel were

being violently attacked, and that social media is being used by ultra-right wing groups to rally people to bring ‘weapons, knives, clubs, knuckledusters’ to use against Palestinian citizens of Israel”. Reports of these disturbing attacks have also exposed excessive and discriminatory force by police against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and hundreds of Palestinians have been detained. In this regard, the High Commissioner has stressed: “I remind the Government of Israel of its duty to protect all its residents and citizens without discrimination based on notions of ‘nationhood’, religious or ethnic origin, and to ensure equal treatment before the law.”

Regrettably, Israeli politicians continue to embolden extremist elements through inflammatory rhetoric and incitement, fomenting further attacks on Palestinians. The viciousness of attacks by armed and radical Israeli settlers against Palestinians throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is further testament to the violence being fuelled by such reckless and provocative hate speech. In Sheikh Jarrah, videos show armed Israeli settlers shooting at Palestinians and breaking into their homes. Without a doubt, these intensifying settler attacks are part and parcel of Israel’s forced displacement campaign in Sheikh Jarrah, reminiscent of the terror and attacks by Zionist militias, in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven from their homes during the Nakba, a grave injustice that continues to this day.

The international community is witnessing, first-hand, the outcome of decades of obstruction of accountability for such flagrant violations of international law and United Nations resolutions. There is no excuse for the Security Council’s continued silence on Israel’s aggression and crimes and no excuse for continued inaction. As the number of innocent civilians killed, wounded and traumatized increases by the minute, and as peoples all over the world gather in protest and demonstrations of solidarity calling for action to stop this carnage and calling for freedom and justice for the Palestinian people, it is shameful that the Council has yet to act to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and enforce the law.

How, one might ask, has Israel carried on this long with complete disregard for international law, without consequence? Needless to say, Israel has been beyond emboldened by such silence that only encourages it to commit barbaric crimes and human rights violations that have no place in the 21st century.

Arguments equating the “two sides” are unjust and unacceptable. The Palestinian people have endured the crimes of this occupation for 54 years to no avail. When they are silent and restrained, quietly suffering the brutality of the Israeli occupation, the world looks away. But when they rise up against this inhumane occupation, they are rebuked, no less with lectures about Israel’s “right to defend themselves”, rhetoric completely detached from the context and root causes of this crisis and completely detached from international law, which does not deny the occupied population protection, but rather ensures it protection.

It is illogical and immoral to expect a defenceless occupied population to accept its occupier’s repeated aggressions, while excusing the occupier’s transgressions and placing the occupier’s security above fundamental human security. Such arguments and double standards bring shame to those who claim to respect international law and human rights and to value human life.

The question of Palestine remains the longest standing item on the agenda of the United Nations, in no small part owing to the Security Council’s failure to uphold its Charter duties and to implement its own resolutions. It must overcome its paralysis and take action to bring an end, not only to the symptoms of this injustice that we so painfully witness in these moments, but also to its root causes: the mass dispossession, 54-year occupation, apartheid and persecution of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power.

This is urgent, to protect and save human lives, which remain in peril as Israel continues its barbaric onslaught against defenceless children, women and men, and to salvage the prospects for a future of peace and security. We urge leaders, peoples and countries of the world to act now, humanely, responsibly and firmly, including with legal measures and sanctions, to bring an end to this grave injustice.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 717 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 May 2021 (A/ES-10/863-S/2021/466) 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

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