



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and  
intergovernmental organizations  
relevant to the question of Palestine

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## **I. CLOSED CONSULTATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS CONVENED BY THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

*On 3 August, the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) held closed consultations with NGOs working on the question of Palestine. The following [Chair summary](#) of its consultations was issued.*

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) held closed consultations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on 3 August 2021, as a virtual meeting under Chatham House rule. Participants included CSO representatives from Palestine, Israel and the United States, as well as from members and observers of the Committee: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Cuba, Egypt, India, Madagascar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Qatar, South Africa, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the State of Palestine.

The session was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal and Chair of the Committee. The session was divided into two panels respectively addressing recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and Israel as well as informing civil society action in the international community, with a focus on advocacy towards the United States administration and Congress. In their interventions and during floor discussions, the participating organizations raised the following issues: (1) the forcible displacement of Palestinians carried out by Jewish settlers and Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was ongoing; (2) hopes among Gaza residents for international involvement after the May 2021 conflict had not been met with adequate Member States action; (3) the change in governments in Israel and the United States provided options for engagement; (4) US-based CSOs were shifting from a focus on the two-State solution to one on “justice and equality”, emphasizing a human rights approach; and (5) the ‘apartheid’ framework to look at Israeli policies and practices was gaining traction.

In his introductory remarks, the Chair welcomed the participants and reiterated that the Committee mandate was to promote an end to the Israeli occupation, seek a just and peaceful settlement and support the realization of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including self-determination, sovereignty and right to return. He underlined that the objective of the Committee’s engagement with civil society was to harness their potential in the OPT, Israel and elsewhere to promote the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights through strengthened cooperation, including joint activities and exchange of information.

Addressing recent developments in the OPT, participants highlighted the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The most prominent case mentioned was the threat of eviction of Palestinian residents from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. In addition, houses in other neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, such as Silwan, continued to be subjected to demolition orders. A further case was that of the Palestinian Bedouin community of Humsa Al-Bqai’a in the Jordan Valley facing the displacement of its residents and destruction of its homes. Also highlighted were a rise in arbitrary arrests and the excessive use of force against Palestinians, including children, provocations against community activists in Sheikh Jarrah, as well as the collective punishment of residents through the closing-off of their neighbourhood by Israeli forces.

Participants reported that, during and shortly after the 11-day military confrontation between Israel and Palestinian groups in May, Gaza residents had begun to hope for a solution of their long-standing plight because of the international community's revived focus on the conflict. Specifically, numerous statements by US parliamentarians had questioned unqualified US support and military aid to Israel while also backing US Congresswoman Betty McCollum's draft law "Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living under Israeli Military Occupation Act". Most importantly, the military escalation had seemed to underpin growing recognition of Israel as an "apartheid state". However, two months after the end of the violence, the international community had not addressed the worsening human rights and humanitarian conditions, leading to disillusionment and a feeling of having been let down. As an example, the border crossings to Israel remained all-but-closed and only humanitarian relief materials were allowed to enter Gaza.

A participant pointed out that even after the recent Israeli elections and the ouster of former Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israel's occupation policies remained in place. This was because "occupation was not a policy but an identity" of the Israeli government, as reflected by recent security developments in Jerusalem: the large-scale displacement of Palestinians, the violation of the Holy Sites' status quo, the "crushing" of Palestinian political activities, and the increasing behaviour of the Israeli police as a "rogue militia" in the City. All these actions called for the international community to engage the new Israeli government with the aim of alleviating some of the more aggressive forms of occupation. In this regard, the inauguration of a new US administration under President Biden had also brought possibilities of engagement on the question of Palestine that were non-existent under President Trump. In addition, but in the same context, the case of Sheikh Jarrah had shifted from being perceived as "a real estate issue" to an international cause *célèbre*, reflecting the core issues of the Palestine question, mobilizing public opinion and foreign governments, garnering strong support also in the United States.

In connection with the mobilization for support on the question of Palestine in the United States, participants quoted a recent article by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that had argued for a new approach to the conflict as "statements in support of equal rights, security and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians ring hollow in the face of policies and actions that actively undermine these principles." It was underlined that 'people of conscience' from all backgrounds in the United States, including a large and growing number of Jewish Americans, were increasingly appreciating the realities in the OPT, such as Israel's use of violence to displace East Jerusalemites, the collusion of Israeli police and "settler lynch mobs" in attacking Palestinians, as well as the reasons and dynamics of the recent escalation in Gaza.

Nonetheless, it was noted, following four years marked by the "Trump-Netanyahu alliance", during which the US public had witnessed Israel appropriating even more Palestinian land and water resources, enforcing racist and discriminatory laws and cementing a "one-State apartheid" reality – including the tightening of the Gaza blockade, massive settlement expansion and the largest scale of Palestinians' displacement in a decade, and open pursuit of annexation – the Biden administration had not significantly changed US policy and action, approaching these issues with avoidance and de-prioritization. A participant noted that the failure to reverse former President Trump's radical policies had now made them "Biden policies", including the recognition of Jerusalem as the sole and undivided capital of Israel in violation of international law and

UN resolutions and maintaining the false claim that settlements were not illegal, which could pave the way for Israeli annexation of huge swaths of West Bank territory.

At the same time, there were growing numbers of US parliamentarians in support of and working for Palestinian rights, moving from hollow condemnation to attempts to promote accountability. The 2018 and 2020 legislative elections had seen landslide victories of representatives putting forward progressive legislation such as the “Palestinian Children and Families Act”. These parliamentarians could be considered as representing the outcome of a massive shift in public opinion within constituencies including young Democrats, African Americans, and Jewish Americans. Recent opinion polls had shown that the latter increasingly understood that Israel was behaving like an “apartheid” state and therefore they supported Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions movements. Jewish activism for justice and equality was also increasing in US campuses and city councils.

It had become challenging for many key organizations in the United States to dissociate working on justice and equality at home from working on Palestinian rights in the OPT – weakening the notion of “Israel’s exceptionalism”. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, Israel’s military escalation in Gaza and attacks in East Jerusalem had triggered large demonstrations in US cities in support of Palestinian rights. The highest number of people to date were now engaged in online “Contact US Congress” actions, with over 160 organizations – including those supporting Black Lives Matter, immigrant rights groups and faith-based ones – having endorsed the Bill introduced by US Congresswoman McCollum referenced above.

The grassroots pressure demanding change in US policy vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine also stemmed from the publication of op-eds by Palestinians describing their decades-long experience of living under Israeli occupation and denial of their rights. Photos of Palestinian children killed by the Israeli forces were featured on the front pages of publications previously less keen to highlight such stories, such as the New York Times.

Against this noticeable shift in public opinion, in the United States and elsewhere, meeting participants called on Committee Members and Observers to recognize the case of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians in the OPT as one of “apartheid”. To this end, participants appealed to just use the definition of ‘apartheid’ included in international covenants: a universal legal term of a crime against humanity, not limited to the South African example, referring to severe abuses known as inhumane acts when committed in a context of systematic oppression by one racial group over another. By now, leading human rights CSOs had reached the conclusion that Israel was committing the crime of apartheid because of its policies and practices in the OPT, intended to control Palestinian demographics and lands for the exclusive benefit of Jewish Israelis and to maximize the acquisition of land for Jewish Israelis at the expense of the Palestinian inhabitants, confined to living in densely populated enclaves.

The participating CSOs formulated several key recommendations to the Committee, such as re-establishing the UN Centre against Apartheid, whose mandate would include promoting anti-apartheid actions by governmental and non-governmental organizations, instituting an arms embargo and supporting an oil embargo against Israel as well as legitimizing popular resistance. Participants also asked to appoint a global envoy on the crimes of apartheid and persecution.

Furthermore, the creation of a global coalition, as a Member States-led process, to galvanize cross-regional support was mentioned.

Participants argued that a more than 50-year occupation could no longer be seen as “temporary”, and a 30-year stalled peace process alone was not sufficient to dismantle systematic repression; therefore, the first step would be to diagnose the problem correctly. For millions of Palestinians in the OPT, ‘apartheid’ should no longer be considered a hypothetical scenario but the present-day reality. Whether Member States were striving for a two-State or a one-State solution, it was recommended they use the term ‘apartheid’ as it was important to recognize the reality “for what it was” and bring to bear the measures needed to tackle that reality. More importantly, Member States needed to focus on human rights abuses on the ground as a first step to a political solution. Accountability was stressed as imperative.

Participants pointed to US polls showing increasing support among Democrat voters for conditioning US military aid to Israel on prohibiting its use in violation of human rights.

Additional positive signals were the recent decision of the “Ben & Jerry’s” ice cream company ending its business in Israeli settlements and the resulting re-energized calls for consumer activism and boycotts, including ending the non-profit status of US organizations raising funds for Israeli settlements as evidence of a growing momentum. For this reason, civil society representatives called on the Committee to join them in keeping this momentum through engaging US officials and policymakers.

Ambassador Cheikh Niang closed the event.

## **II. UNRWA ADDRESSES NGO’S ALLEGATIONS**

*On 5 August, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the following [statement](#) in response to a publication by UN Watch:*

This week, UN Watch – an organization with a deep history of unfounded and politically-driven assertions against the Agency – released a report accusing 22 UNRWA personnel of promoting violence and hate through social media channels. UNRWA confirms that 10 of the 22 persons mentioned in the report are UNRWA personnel; the others are not associated with the Agency.

UNRWA is upholding the values of the United Nations and has a zero-tolerance policy for hatred. The Agency takes each allegation seriously. It has immediately launched a thorough investigation through due process to determine if any of these 10 persons, out of more than 28,000 personnel, violated the Agency’s social media policies that prohibit personnel from engaging in non-neutral behaviors online. We are concerned that some of the posts violate our rules and policies, and should misconduct be found, UNRWA will take immediate administrative or disciplinary action.

In previous reports over a five years period, UN Watch identified a total of 101 cases where UNRWA personnel allegedly posted content on social media that was in breach of its Regulatory Framework, including the neutrality policy. Upon investigation of these cases, UNRWA found

that 57% of the allegations could not be tied to personnel employed by the Agency at the time of the reported incident. Personnel who were found in breach, then, were either censured and/or subjected to financial penalties.

To suggest that hate is widespread within the Agency and schools is not only misleading and false, but validates sensationalist and politically-motivated attacks that deliberately harm an already vulnerable community: refugee children. UNRWA's mandate is to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to over five million Palestine refugees, a responsibility the Agency takes very seriously. The Agency has invested immense efforts in training its personnel to promote their understanding of neutrality and the vital role it plays in their daily work and of their obligations in that regard, including through courses on social media and neutrality, ethics trainings, and in-person field trainings on neutrality. Oversight and accountability of any organization is vital, and UNRWA welcomes future opportunities of assessment and looks forward to continued partnerships with all parties engaging with UNRWA to ensure every Palestine refugee child has access to quality education.

### **III. UNRWA REITERATES THE INVIOABILITY OF ITS INSTALLATIONS MUST BE RESPECTED AT ALL TIMES**

*On 11 August, UNRWA issued the following [press release](#):*

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reiterates that its installations are inviolable at all times, as it conducts follow-up risks assessment, through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), related to Israeli airstrikes between 13 and 15 May 2021 that damaged several of its premises.

Initial risk assessments have indicated the existence of underground structures that could have led to further damage. The Agency condemns the existence and potential use of such underground structures, including tunnels, in the strongest possible terms, and letters of protest have been sent to the de facto authorities in Gaza. The Agency has also protested the takeover by the de facto authorities of one of these schools, which undermines the inviolability and neutrality of UNRWA premises. These actions also stand to compromise the safe return of children to their schools and scuttles the Agency efforts to open the schools on time.

The Agency demands that all parties desist from any activities or conduct that put beneficiaries and staff at risk and undermine the ability of UNRWA to provide assistance to Palestine refugees in safety and security.

#### **IV. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS CONDEMN RAID ON DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL, URGE ISRAEL TO MEANINGFULLY PROBE CHILD DEATHS**

*On 13 August, Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression; Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and Ms. Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#):*

UN human rights experts have called on the Government of Israel to immediately return confidential documents and office equipment that its military seized from the offices of Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCIP) in Al-Bireh, in the occupied West Bank.

“We are deeply concerned by the Israeli military’s interference with the human rights work of a well-known and well-regarded NGO,” said the experts. Computers, hard drives, binders and other materials were taken from DCIP’s offices during a nighttime raid at the end of July.

“The indispensable work of Palestinian, Israeli and international civil society organizations has provided a measure of much-needed accountability in documenting and scrutinizing the dispiriting human rights trends in the occupied Palestinian territory,” the experts said.

“In recent years, DCIP has critically and reliably reported on the patterns of arrests, maiming and killings of Palestinian children by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The silencing or hindering of these activities violates the fundamental human rights of expression and association, which Israel has committed itself to uphold through its ratification of the two 1966 International Covenants.”

From the start of the year until the end of July 2021, Israeli military forces have killed 11 Palestinian children in the West Bank. This is more than the recorded deaths of Palestinian children under the occupation in all of 2020. As well, a reported 67 Palestinian children were killed in Gaza during the violence of May 2021.

“All civilian lives under occupation are protected under international law. This is particularly true for the rights of children,” the experts said.

“We are aware of the long-standing criticisms of the lack of transparent and impartial investigations in apparent violations of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli military. Accordingly, we call upon the Government of Israel to work with the international community to establish an impartial body to conduct transparent, arm’s length and public investigations into these deaths consistent with the standards on international law, and to apply the lessons gleaned from these investigations to strenuously avoid such a pattern of tragedy in the future.”

The UN experts also called upon the Government of Israel to fully respect the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998.

“An occupying power with a true commitment to human rights would protect and encourage the work of human rights defenders, and not ostracize, harass or silence them,” the experts stated.

“Such a government would respect the critical scrutiny of their work, even if their reports and allegations excoriated the conduct of that government. And such a government – even one conducting a long-term military occupation – would accept that human rights can be infringed only as a last measure and then only in a minimally impairing manner that is subject to meaningful judicial review.”

## **V. UNRWA CALLS FOR SUPPORT FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN LEBANON**

*On 19 August, UNRWA issued the following [press release](#):*

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is extremely alarmed by the rapid deterioration of the situation in Lebanon and its effects on Palestine refugees. Between the economic and financial meltdown, COVID-19, the disastrous impact of the Beirut Port explosion, and as the country plunges deeper into multiple crises, Palestine refugees, one of Lebanon’s most vulnerable communities, struggle ever harder to survive.

The crises that have accumulated since 2019 have affected all segments of society in Lebanon, drastically impacting the access of refugees in general – and Palestine refugees in particular – to sources of livelihoods. The unprecedented depreciation of the local currency has slashed the purchasing power of Palestine refugees as prices continue to increase dramatically, with inflation surpassing 100 per cent. Poverty rates are soaring amongst vulnerable communities, including Palestine refugees.

“While the international community and aid agencies struggle to fill the unprecedented needs in Lebanon, which is now witnessing an acute shortage of fuel and goods, it is crucial to give adequate attention to the extremely dire conditions that most Palestine refugees in Lebanon live in, including Palestine refugees who have escaped the armed conflict in Syria,” said UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini.

UNRWA remains the main provider of basic services, such as health, education and camp improvement to over 210,000 Palestine refugees present in Lebanon. These include about 28,000 Palestine refugees from Syria.

A recent briefing paper by the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum gave a very somber description of the hardship that Palestine refugees face in Lebanon, describing them as “slipping through the cracks” of the service system in the country, despite the availability of UNRWA basic services to them. Surveys conducted lately by UNRWA confirm that employment opportunities, including as daily paid workers, of Palestine refugees in Lebanon have become almost inexistent and that almost all Palestine refugees are living below the poverty line.

As the UN and the broader aid community in Lebanon is stretched to the limits in its attempts to support the people of Lebanon, UNRWA calls on donors to support the response to the most urgent needs of Palestine refugees. These include cash assistance, increased coverage for health and medical services and ensuring that Palestine refugee children in Lebanon go back to school.

“The situation in Palestine refugee camps is highly volatile and young people in particular report a level hopelessness that leaves few prospects for a dignified life,” said Mr. Lazzarini. “It is extremely urgent to ensure adequate support to UNRWA to help ease the extreme vulnerability that Palestine refugees in Lebanon are in.”

## **VI. UNRWA CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION AFTER THE KILLING OF A STUDENT OF A SCHOOL RUN BY THE AGENCY**

*On 26 August, UNRWA issued the following [statement](#):*

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is deeply saddened by the killing of 15-year-old Imad Saleh Khaled Hashash from Balata refugee camp, in the occupied West Bank, during the clashes that followed an arrest operation carried out by Israeli Security Forces (ISF) in the camp yesterday.

According to initial reports, Imad, a ninth-grade student at the UNRWA Balata Boys’ School 1, was standing on the roof of his home when he was shot in the head with live ammunition. He was pronounced dead shortly after arriving at the hospital.

The ISF say Imad was shot in retaliation for throwing an object at soldiers. UNRWA calls on the ISF to exercise restraint in their use of force and to minimize casualties.

Imad’s killing adds to the ever-growing number of Palestinians killed by the Israeli forces. In 2021 alone, the ISF have killed 59 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including 22 refugees and 13 children. Some 984 Palestinians have been injured by live fire since the beginning of the year.

UNRWA continues to call on Israel to investigate these fatalities, the use of live ammunition and to hold accountable those that violate international standards. Until the Israeli military control over Palestinian civilians’ ceases, Israeli military forces must protect the lives and ensure the dignity of Palestinians living under their control.

## **VII. SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON MIDEAST SITUATION**

*On 30 August, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland made the following statement to the Security Council ([S/PV.8847](#)), excerpts of which appear below.*

More than three months have passed since the deadly escalation between Israel and militants in Gaza, and the situation remains tense. In response, the United Nations continues to engage all sides to maintain calm and provide urgent assistance to Gaza’s residents.

On 19 August, the State of Qatar announced a contribution of \$40 million over four months to the United Nations to provide cash assistance to some 100,000 needy families in Gaza. I welcome Qatar’s contribution to support vulnerable families, which comes in addition to the \$10 million per month that Qatar already gives to provide the programme of the United Nations Office for Project

Services to support fuel to the Gaza power plant. Those two efforts combined are vital to improving the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation of the Gaza Strip.

Such support came following the United Nations humanitarian appeal in May and its call to the international community at the technical meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) in July to work with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the United Nations on implementing a robust programme of humanitarian aid and recovery for the Gaza Strip, developed in full contact with the Palestinian Authority. As the United Nations is about to implement the programme of cash assistance for needy families, I wish to thank the Government of Qatar for its generous support to those programmes, and the Palestinian Authority for its support for them.

In addition, some \$45 million of the requested \$95 million has been raised for the United Nations humanitarian flash appeal, and an additional nearly \$55 million has been mobilized in support of the humanitarian response more broadly. I again thank donors for their generous support, while reiterating that further contributions are urgently needed.

Concerning the continued level of violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory during the reporting period, in Gaza, militants launched incendiary balloons on multiple occasions, and one rocket towards Israel. The rocket was intercepted, causing no damage, while the balloons caused several fires in areas around the Gaza Strip. In retaliation, the Israel Defense Forces fired some 37 missiles against Hamas targets, resulting in damage but no injuries.

Tensions along the Gaza perimeter reached a peak on 21 August, when hundreds of Palestinians attended a rally organized by Palestinian factions. During the demonstration, hundreds of people approached the security fence and threw stones and, reportedly, improvised explosive devices towards Israeli security personnel. Israeli forces fired on Palestinian protesters, injuring 51 Palestinians, including 25 children, the vast majority due to live ammunition. One Palestinian man and a 12-year-old Palestinian boy subsequently died of their wounds. One Israeli soldier was shot by a Palestinian and later died of his injuries. That evening, Israel launched six retaliatory air strikes against what it said were Hamas military sites in Gaza.

On 25 August, another demonstration near the security fence east of Khan Younis led to another clash between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. Fourteen Palestinians were injured, including five by live ammunition.

I reiterate that children must never be targeted or put in harm's way, and I call on all sides to show restraint, avoid provocations at the fence and keep the protests peaceful.

In the occupied West Bank, clashes, attacks, search-and-arrest operations, including in Area A, and other incidents resulted in the death of nine Palestinians, including two children, and injuries to more than 280 Palestinians, including with live ammunition or, in the case of the vast majority, with rubber bullets. One Israeli security personnel was injured during those events.

Near-daily clashes near Beita village, in the northern West Bank, took place in the context of protests against the nearby outpost of Evyatar, which is held by Israeli security forces after settlers evacuated the location in July. In more than 100 days of protests, seven Palestinians were killed

and 972 injured by Israeli security forces, with one killed and 226 injured during the reporting period.

On 27 July, a Palestinian man was shot dead by Israeli security forces near Beita. According to Israeli forces, the man advanced towards Israeli soldiers holding a suspicious object and ignored warning shots. The man, reportedly a water technician, was seen on video with a pipe wrench near a water pump shortly before he was shot. Israeli authorities said they opened an investigation. On 6 August, another Palestinian was killed by Israeli security forces' live fire in Beita during clashes with those forces.

On 28 July, an 11-year-old Palestinian boy was killed in Beit Ummar after the ISF fired at the car in which he was travelling with his father and siblings. Israeli authorities have opened an investigation. The next day, the ISF killed a 20-year-old Palestinian man amid clashes during the boy's funeral.

On 3 August, six Palestinians were injured during an exchange of fire with Israeli security forces in the Jenin refugee camp, in Area A of the West Bank, including a 25-year-old man, who later succumbed to his wounds. On 16 August, four Palestinians were killed and another was injured by live ammunition in an exchange of fire with Israeli security forces during an Israeli search operation in the camp.

On 24 August, Israeli forces killed a 15-year-old boy with live ammunition during an arrest operation in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. According to Israeli officials, the boy had been threatening to throw a large object at Israeli security forces personnel. However, witnesses dispute the account and say that the boy was shot in the head by Israeli security forces personnel at some distance.

During the reporting period, six Palestinians, including one woman and one child, were injured in five violent incidents involving Israeli settlers. Palestinians perpetrated attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians, resulting in five injuries and damage to property.

On 17 August, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy was attacked in the northern West Bank, during which a group of Israeli settlers kidnapped the boy, tied him to a tree and brutally assaulted, cut and burned him. The boy, who lost consciousness, was eventually handed over to a Palestinian ambulance. I am deeply concerned about this heinous act, and I expect the Israeli authorities to undertake a swift, thorough and transparent investigation and ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable.

I am concerned about the continued tragic loss of life and serious injuries in the occupied Palestinian territory. I note that settler violence against Palestinian civilians is recurrent in my reporting to the Council. Further measures must be taken to ensure that Israel fulfils its obligation to protect Palestinian civilians from violence, including by Israeli settlers, and to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for such attacks. I reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

In a concerning incident on 14 August, during the protests in Beita, Palestinians set fire to a Star of David containing the image of a swastika. Such displays of anti-Semitism are unacceptable. I urge all parties to refrain from incitement and provocative actions.

During the reporting period, Palestinian civil society organizations and human rights defenders continued to face restrictions on their freedoms of expression, assembly and association. On 29 July, Israeli security forces reportedly conducted searches of the offices of the Bisan Center for Research and Development and the Defence for Children International-Palestine in Ramallah and confiscated equipment. On 21 August, Palestinian security forces arrested 23 people in Ramallah for their participation in a planned demonstration, the majority of them before the protest started. Several of those arrested were well-known human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and political activists. All the detained were subsequently released.

I call on Israel to take all necessary measures to protect the right to freedom of association and ensure that human rights organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory are protected from arbitrary actions. I also urge the Palestinian Authority to immediately stop arrests of human rights defenders, journalists and activists on charges that impinge upon the exercise of freedom of expression.

Israeli demolitions and confiscations of Palestinian homes and other structures continued throughout the reporting period. Overall, Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced owners to demolish 81 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and 22 in East Jerusalem – displacing 165 Palestinians, including 33 women and 98 children. The demolitions were carried out due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. On 4 August, 17 structures were seized in the Bedouin community of Ibziq in the Jordan Valley – displacing 27 people, including 19 children. The confiscation was carried out due to the community's location in an Israeli-declared "firing zone".

On 2 August, Israel's Supreme Court held a hearing to consider an appeal request by four Palestinian families facing eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. The judges proposed a compromise, which was not agreed to, and the hearing was adjourned with no date to reconvene. On 15 August, the Supreme Court postponed the eviction of several other Palestinian families living in the same area of Sheikh Jarrah, pending a decision on their request to appeal the decision to evict them. On 11 August, the Jerusalem Local Affairs Court froze the demolition of several dozen structures in the Al-Bustan section of the Silwan neighbourhood until 10 February 2022, pending planning discussions that are under way. I urge Israel to cease the demolition and seizure of Palestinian property throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Returning to the situation in Gaza, I note a gradual and partial easing of the access restrictions by Israeli authorities. On 29 July, the fishing zone was again expanded to 12 nautical miles after being restricted for four days in response to the launching of incendiary balloons into Israel from the Gaza Strip. On 13 and 26 August, Israeli authorities announced additional easing of import and export restrictions. For the first time in 18 months, permits will be given to 2,000 Palestinian traders and 350 businesspeople to cross from Gaza into Israel.

While some 6,000 trucks – including of construction materials, food and non-food items and fuel – entered Gaza through Kerem Shalom, the volume of trade still remains below pre-escalation levels. On 23 August, for the first time in over six months, Egyptian authorities closed the Rafah crossing to all movement, and reopened it fully on 29 August.

Although movement and access in and out of Gaza should be further improved, no amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will address the challenges facing Gaza. The current gradual approach is a holding operation and not a strategic way forward or a solution for the people of Gaza. Gaza requires political solutions that will see a full lifting of Israeli closures, in line with resolution 1860 (2009), as well as the return of a legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State of which Gaza is an integral part. It must also see Hamas and other armed groups stop the launching of incendiary devices, rockets and mortars and end the militant build-up.

Following the takeover by Hamas of a school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Agency reiterated, in an 11 August statement, that its installations are inviolable at all times. The Agency protested the takeover and condemned the existence and potential use of structures, including tunnels, under its premises in the strongest possible terms. While Hamas subsequently vacated the school, such actions undermine the inviolability and neutrality of UNRWA premises and compromise the safe return of children to their schools on time. UNRWA and the United Nations Mine Action Service are working to remove any remaining unexploded ordnance as soon as possible.

The state of the Palestinian Authority's finances remains precarious. While the monthly transfer of clearance revenues from Israel to the PA occurs regularly, Israel continues to deduct an amount equivalent to what is calculated as paid by the PA to the families of prisoners and martyrs. Those deductions, along with numerous other fiscal leakages, make it increasingly difficult for the PA to cover its minimum expenditures, including salaries to Government employees and social protection payments to needy households. I urge Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the impasse over the prisoner payment scheme and other fiscal leakages; and I call on donors to provide urgent financial support to the PA.

On a positive note, on 29 July, the Israeli Ministers of Health and Environmental Protection met with their Palestinian counterparts for the first time in many years, amid an increase in engagement between Israeli and Palestinian officials. On 29 August, yesterday, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz met with President Abbas in Ramallah, where they discussed security policy and economic issues, among other aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. That was the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the formation of the current Israeli Government. I welcome that dialogue, and I encourage more ministerial-level engagement, particularly to advance financial and economic cooperation. I hope that such contacts can result in bringing the parties to a position to advance unresolved issues, including political ones and those related to the implementation of agreements made by the parties.

On 27 August, Israeli Prime Minister Bennett met with United States President Biden. The two sides exchanged views on the efforts to advance peace, security and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians, and reaffirmed the importance of Israel's historic partnerships with Egypt and Jordan, as well as expanding relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

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Finally, demonstrable change is needed on the ground, especially for the people living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

I remain extremely concerned by the dire financial situation facing the Palestinian Authority and its ability to withstand the ongoing fiscal and health crises. That may affect all Palestinians. It is critical that the PA be empowered to exercise its responsibilities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including on reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee remains the established mechanism whereby the parties and donors can address relevant issues pertaining to the economic situation of PA institution-building. The next meeting of the AHLC can work out plans for how outstanding issues can be addressed by the parties, with the support of donors and the United Nations.

I also believe that no positive, hopeful step should be wasted, and despite the formidable challenges, we should help provide momentum to that renewed engagement.

Nevertheless, serious political efforts are required to return to meaningful negotiations that will address all final-status issues and achieve a negotiated end to the occupation and the vision of two States, living side by side in peace and security, based on the 1967 borders, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and signed agreements. In the meantime, both sides should abide by the signed agreements and avoid unilateral actions that change the reality on the ground and undermine the two-State solution.

## **VIII. UN PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE APPROVES ITS ANNUAL REPORT, ACCREDITS TWO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

*On 30 August at its 403<sup>rd</sup> meeting, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People approved its annual report ([A/76/35](#)) to the General Assembly and accredited two NGOs: Cuban Association of the United Nations, and the Al-Quds Foundation for Medical Schools in Palestine. The following press release ([GA/PAL/1440](#)) reflected the occasion:*

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People approved its annual report today, as the State of Palestine made a powerful call for the General Assembly to take “responsible and serious” action to end Israel’s occupation, nearly 74 years after its historic passage of resolution [181](#), partitioning Palestine and leaving its people to an unjust fate.

“Only accountability can alter the downward trajectory of the situation on the ground” towards support for Palestinian rights, including to self-determination, emphasized Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, Deputy Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, noting that recent events have highlighted the seriousness of the situation.

Citing the colonization and annexation of Palestinian land, apartheid policies against Palestinians, including refugees, and the deprivation of all their fundamental human rights, she said the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has made a critical situation more difficult, as reflected in the grave humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip.

She said that, in its letters to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, her delegation has reflected the escalating intensity of crimes being committed by Israel and extremist settlers – attacks, arrests, detentions and imprisonment, among them. The killing of

children, in particular, has become a routine practice of the occupation forces, emboldened by impunity and right-wing rhetoric, she added.

Meanwhile, Palestinian homes, land and property continue to be seized and destroyed and the Palestinian people displaced, she said. “This is happening every day,” she pointed out, drawing attention to events in Sheikh Jarra and Silwan, where Palestinian families are under threat of expulsion or home demolition, as extremist settlers attempt to ethnically cleanse them from East Jerusalem.

Moreover, Israel continues to defy resolution [2334](#) (2016) and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, in contempt of international demands, she stressed, noting that, meanwhile, Palestinian civilians protesting the annexation of their lands are attacked with lethal force. Casualty numbers in the occupied West Bank town of Beita speak to the violence, she added.

She went on to underline the persistence of incitement and incursions at holy sites, notably at the Aqsa Mosque compound, endangering its sanctity. Israel continues its occupation and military siege of Gaza, once again in excessively forcible response to civilian protests at the Gaza border fence, she said, citing Israel’s use of live fire just last week against protesters at the fence, which injured 51 civilians, including 22 children.

While for some that behaviour may have become normalized, it is “absolutely abnormal, inhumane and immoral”, and in breach of international law, she insisted. It is time to implement United Nations resolutions and give meaning to the important principles and decisions therein, she said, stressing that it is also time to support an International Criminal Court investigation into crimes perpetrated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a crucial step towards justice for the innocent victims.

Against that backdrop, she urged States that have not yet joined the Committee to support its efforts and to advance shared principles and goals in a spirit of dialogue. The basis of the solution is long-known and is reflected in the international consensus, despite routine cynical attempts to dismantle it, she said. That consensus endures amid the constant calls to end the occupation and achieve a two-State solution on the pre-1967 lines, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, to realize Palestinians’ fundamental rights, including to self-determination, and a just solution for refugees, in accordance with resolution 194.

“This would be a true cornerstone of peace and stability in the Middle East,” she stressed. She urged the Committee to continue its efforts, welcoming its cooperation with the Secretary-General and other United Nations entities, and ensuring a meaningful role for the Organization in seeking a just solution. She encouraged partnership with the League of Arab States, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union, as well as with civil society groups.

Cheikh Niang (Senegal), Chair of the Committee, said that it conducted a significant number of activities during the reporting period, with most events livestreamed on United Nations Web TV and social media. He added that his statements highlighted the deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, called for a halt to Israel’s activities, and for progress towards a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict. On 10 February, the bureau met with the President of the General Assembly to exchange ideas on greater cooperation in

resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on financing for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In March, he continued, the Committee conducted outreach meetings advocating for the long-overdue realization of Palestinian rights and reinvigoration of the peace process, with participants including representatives of the European Union, Russian Federation, China, France and Mexico. He noted that on 7 April, a virtual event on refugees featured a briefing by UNRWA and remarks the General Assembly President, and on 18 April, the Committee sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, asking Israel to comply with its obligations and allow elections in East Jerusalem.

Later, on 10 May, the Committee expressed grave concerns about violence at the Aqsa Mosque compound and called for Security Council action to salvage prospects for peace, he said, recalling that, on 18 May, a forum was held on the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). On 20 May, the Chair addressed a General Assembly plenary meeting calling for consolidation of the ceasefire agreed by Israeli and Palestinian forces. On 1 July, the Committee and OIC held an international conference themed “Forced demographic change in Jerusalem — grave breaches and a threat to peace”. Closed consultations with six representatives of civil society organizations were held on 3 August, focusing on how the international community can hold Israel accountable for violations of Palestinian rights, he said, adding that the question of re-establishing the United Nations Centre against Apartheid was also addressed.

The Chair announced that the next consultations will be held in November or December. The 2021 commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on 29 November, followed by the 1 December General Assembly plenary meeting on the Question of Palestine, with the only resolution in discussion addressing the peaceful resolution of the situation.

Further, the Chair announced that five civil society organizations requested accreditation, with two conforming to requirements: Cuban Association of the United Nations based in Cuba, and the Al-Quds Foundation for Medical Schools in Palestine based in the United Kingdom.

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