

STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

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THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**OPEN DEBATE
ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

New York, 19 October 2021

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, at the outset I would like to congratulate Kenya for its able presidency of the Security Council this month.

Mr. President,

As we engage once more in this quarterly debate, the situation in the **Occupied Palestinian Territory** remains tense. Palestinians continue to be victims of increasing levels of violence and insecurity, recorded by the United Nations, most non-governmental organizations and even the Israeli press. Much of this violence is increasingly perpetrated by illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, who have stepped up attacks and harassment against the civilian population as well as establishing of illegal outposts on Palestinian land.

The Committee remains concerned by the continued **loss of life and serious injuries**, especially to children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). According to the Special Coordinator, from 12 June to 27 September alone, 27 Palestinians, including 2 women and five

children were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, security operations and other incidents. During the same period, thousands of Palestinians were injured, including 10 women and 530 children.

The Committee urges further measures to ensure that Israel fulfils its obligations as the occupying Power, in accordance with international humanitarian law, to protect Palestinian civilians from violence, including by Israeli settlers, and to investigate and hold accountable all those responsible for such attacks.

Israeli **demolitions and confiscations** of Palestinian homes and structures have also continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since the Committee's last statement to this Council. According to the Special Coordinator's September 2021 statement to the Council, these actions displaced 433 people, including 102 women and 251 children during the 2 June to 27 September period. The Committee calls on 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 and equally in respect of international human rights law.

During September, Palestinians continued to demonstrate in the occupied West Bank to protest the situation of **Palestinian prisoners** in Israeli detention, including six Palestinians on hunger strike. On 6

September, the reported escape of six Palestinians from Israel's Gilboa prison, who were later rearrested, ignited protests that escalated into clashes throughout the West Bank and Gaza. The Committee warns that punitive measures by Israel against the Palestinian prisoners and detainees it is holding in its jails risk provoking an open confrontation and escalation of this volatile situation.

Palestinian civil society organizations continued to face restrictions to their freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. On 11 August, Ms. Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, noted that arrests and raids on the homes of Palestinian **human rights defenders** form part of a wider crackdown against those defending the human rights of Palestinians in the OPT.

We also continue to witness the limitation of access by Palestinian worshippers to sacred sites. For example, UNSCO reported that tensions rose at the Ibrahimi Mosque site in Hebron's Old City, following a decision by Israeli authorities to temporarily restrict access by Palestinian worshippers between 21 and 24 September, during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.

In occupied East Jerusalem, a recent Israeli judicial decision to allow "silent Jewish prayers" in Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif

under Israeli police escort risks inflaming an already precarious situation because it constitutes an alteration of the historic and legal status-quo at the holy site, which must be respected, as repeatedly demanded by the General Assembly, Security Council, Human Rights Council and UNESCO.

UN human rights experts on 13 August 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. The Committee calls on Israel to take all necessary measures to protect the **right to freedom of association** and ensure that human rights organizations in the OPT are protected from such arbitrary actions and repression.

Mr. President,

Over six months from the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, the truce in Gaza remains fragile and reconstruction and recovery remain urgent. The Committee is encouraged by recent efforts to facilitate **movement and access** to and from Gaza. In particular, the Committee notes the limited easing of access restrictions by Israeli authorities, the expanding of the fishing zone (on 29 July); easing of import and export restrictions (on 13 and 26 August); issuance of permits to Palestinian traders and businesspeople to cross from Gaza into Israel; and, more critically, allowing construction materials, food

and non-food items, and fuel to enter Gaza. However, let me reiterate that Gaza requires political solutions that will see a complete lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza, and recall as well that Gaza remains an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and must be part of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State.

The Committee echoes concerns by many about the **Palestinian Authority's financial position**, which according to the Special Coordinator has deteriorated in 2021 partly due to Israel's withholding of additional clearance revenues since July, and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Committee calls on donors to support the Palestinian people, it also urges the Palestinian Authority to implement commensurate reform priorities to improve the fiscal outlook.

The Committee welcomes the announcement to hold the delayed Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) meeting in November 2021 to consider **Palestinian needs and financial contributions**. In addition, the Committee appreciates Qatar's contribution of US\$40 million to the United Nations to support cash assistance to 100,00 vulnerable families in Gaza and an additional US\$10 million per month for the Gaza Power Plant.

The Committee also commends donors' response to the **UN's Humanitarian Flash Appeal**, which raised some US\$45 million of the

requested US\$95 million to support humanitarian aid and recovery for the Gaza Strip. The Committee appreciates, inter alia, the US Government's decision of 22 September to release the remaining US\$20 million of a total humanitarian aid package of US\$75 million for Palestinians earmarked in March of this year.

The annual report to the General Assembly on the work on UNRWA presented by Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini, 5 October, highlighted the Agency's financial situation that remains dramatic and uncertain, with lack the funds to operate in November and December due to the decrease in funding by some donors and despite the return of the US this year as a partner and donor to the Agency. A disruption in UNRWA services will deny millions of Palestine refugees, among them so many young people, across the region the essential rights of a dignified life: education, health, food and housing. The Committee thus reiterates its appeal to the international community to provide timely, sufficient and predictable funding to UNRWA, so that is can fulfil its General Assembly mandate to assist the Palestine refugees pending a just solution on the basis of resolution 194 (III).

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the Committee remains committed to upholding its responsibilities towards the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom. It supports the idea of a just solution based on international law and

relevant United Nations resolutions that ensure two States, Israel, and Palestine, live side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 lines and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State. In this regard, the Committee will remain a reliable partner in support of international efforts to create the conditions to garner broader global support for the just resolution of the question of Palestine and the realization of a peaceful and secure Middle East.

I thank you for your attention.