



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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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:
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I. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL LAZZARINI SWORN IN AT CEREMONY IN NEW YORK

On 1 October 2021, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the following [press release](#).

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini has been officially sworn into office by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Mr. Lazzarini took his oath of office at a ceremony in New York on 30 September 2021, nearly 18 months after having officially assumed his position. The ceremony had been postponed due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

“I, Philippe Lazzarini, solemnly declare and promise to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as an international civil servant of the United Nations,” said the Commissioner-General.

Mr. Lazzarini came to UNRWA with nearly thirty years of experience in humanitarian assistance and international coordination in conflict and post-conflict areas in the United Nations, including as Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon in the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), head of delegations for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the private sector.

Since he took office in April 2021, Philippe Lazzarini has conducted numerous missions in the Agency’s fields of operations, engaging with Palestine refugees and stakeholders, has intensively engaged with Member States and addressed both the UN Security Council and 4th committee of the UN General Assembly. He is currently finalizing a strategy for a modern, efficient and resolutely principled UNRWA, in line with the mandate it receives from the General Assembly.

“It is imperative that UNRWA remains the strong UN Agency that it has been since it was created, an Agency that succeeded in promoting human development in the region,” said Mr. Lazzarini. “UNRWA has rolled out one of the most cost-effective and highly successful education systems in the Middle East, significantly lowered maternal mortality rates, and addressed food insecurity stemming from protracted conflict. As the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, I will spare no effort to seek solutions that ensure both the short-term continuity of UNRWA services, as well long-term sustainable and predictable funding of the Agency.”

II. UN CALLS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN DIGITAL LITERACY

On 10 October 2021, Ms. Lynn Hastings, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, issued the following [statement](#) on the International Day of the Girl.

Inequality is a global issue, and gender inequities create a significant hurdle for girls trying to reach their innate potential. Palestine is no exception, and many challenges remain to ensure girls are provided equal opportunities to excel.

Gender equity in digital literacy is key to ensuring girls thrive and can be a driver of economic growth and competitive businesses. On the eve of International Day of the Girl, it is important to highlight the enormous potential that exists in Palestine that is currently untapped. According to the recent multiple indicator cluster survey in Palestine (MICS), nearly one in three women with no or basic education have never used the internet, and two out of three women in this category had not used the internet in the three months prior to the survey.

The power and diversity of girls as positive change makers means that investing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for girls and women is needed, both in Palestine and globally. Girls and women need to be the designers of learning and other solutions addressing the challenges and opportunities facing their society.

Increasing investments in closing the digital divide – access to devices, connectivity, skills, and safety – and the opening of pathways for girls to reach their full potential is paramount.

On this very important day, International Day of the Girl, I urge all decision-makers to embrace this reality and ensure today's children, girls in particular, have the tools necessary to be tomorrow's leaders.

III. UNOPS AND PALESTINIAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH SIGN AGREEMENT FOR COVID-19 EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNDED BY JAPAN

On 14 October, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – Jerusalem Office issued the following [press release](#).

UNOPS and the Ministry of Health signed an Agreement today in Ramallah whereby UNOPS will be implementing the procurement services for “The Programme for COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support” under the Japanese Grant Assistance funded by the Government of Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency(JICA) for the benefit of the Ministry.

The Health Minister Dr. Mai Al Kaila and UNOPS Director of the Jerusalem Office Mr. Tokumitsu Kobayashi attended the signing ceremony in the Ministry of Health. This project comes as part of a eight million dollar Grant provided by the Government of Japan to the Palestinian Authority under the Exchange of Notes signed June 2021, for the procurement of COVID-19 related equipment, including vehicles with cold insulation function for vaccine transportation.

This project comes at a critical time and will significantly contribute to the readiness of the Ministry of Health to respond to the COVID-19 crisis through its health facilities in the West Bank and Gaza.

During the ceremony, H.E. Dr. Mai Al Kaila – Minister of Health expressed her deep gratitude to UNOPS for their efforts in completing this vital project, and the continuous support of the Government of Japan. “This project will support the Ministry of Health in procuring COVID-19 related medical supplies including the vehicles for vaccine transportation and other laboratories equipment” she stated.

“We are pleased that UNOPS through JICA will be able to provide the medical equipment and to West Bank and Gaza laboratories to enhance their services in response to the current COVID-19 crisis ” said Tokumitsu Kobayashi, UNOPS Director in the Jerusalem Office. “ UNOPS remains ready to further support Japan in Palestine to fruitfully respond to the urgent needs of the Palestinian healthcare system” he added.

IV. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON MIDEAST SITUATION

On 19 October, Mr. Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; Mr. Daniel Levy, President, U.S./Middle East Project; and Ms. Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian political and civil society leader, addressed the Security Council under agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.” Excerpts from the briefing by Mr. Wennesland are reproduced below (see the full verbatim record of the meeting in [S/PV.8883](#)).

At the outset, I welcome the ongoing engagement between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials. I strongly encourage further expansion of such efforts, which can improve conditions on the ground and pave the way towards reinvigorating the peace process. But we should have no illusions about the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to deteriorate, and we have seen no progress towards realizing a two-State solution. That political stagnation is fuelling tension, instability and a deepening sense of hopelessness. The security situation in Gaza remains fragile, and security dynamics in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are deteriorating, including growing tensions in and around the holy sites.

Settlement activity, evictions, demolitions and the seizure of Palestinian property; military operations by Israeli security forces, in particular in Area A; and movement and access restrictions, including the severe closure of Gaza, further fuel the cycle of violence.

A large number of Palestinians, including children, continue to be killed or injured by Israeli security forces. Settler-related attacks against Palestinians and their property, including in the presence of Israeli security forces, continue. Israeli civilians continue to be subjected to attacks by Palestinians, which have caused deaths, injuries and damages. Israeli and Palestinian civilians are suffering and paying a steep price for the persistence of the conflict, including the protracted occupation.

In addition, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is facing an unprecedented fiscal and financial crisis. A strengthened PA and PA institutions are needed in order to implement the necessary reforms and eventually return to Gaza. I am concerned that those negative trends are occurring simultaneously across the West Bank and Gaza; they should not be left unaddressed.

Daily violence continued throughout the occupied Palestinian territory during the reporting period. In Gaza, while a relative calm largely prevailed, on 30 September a Palestinian man was killed by Israeli security forces as he approached the perimeter fence. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said that the man had approached the fence in the central Gaza Strip with two other men

carrying a suspicious bag and digging in the ground. Relatives of the man disputed the accounts, saying he was hunting birds. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, clashes, attacks, search and arrest operations and other incidents resulted in the death of three Palestinians and injuries from live fire and rubber-coated metal bullets to 66 Palestinians, including nine children and one woman. Four Israeli civilians and two soldiers were injured in the course of those events.

On 30 September, a Palestinian woman was shot and killed by Israeli security forces after reportedly attempting to stab Israeli security forces officers in Jerusalem's Old City. On the same day, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian man in the village of Burqin near Jenin. According to Israeli security forces, the man had opened fire at Israeli troops as they were conducting an arrest operation. Palestinian Islamic Jihad later claimed that the man was one of its members.

On 14 October, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian and wounded another while they were allegedly throwing Molotov cocktails at civilian vehicles west of Bethlehem. On the same day, a Palestinian man drove his vehicle into and injured an IDF soldier near the Qalandia checkpoint. Israeli forces fired on the vehicle and injured and arrested the driver.

In addition, since 8 October we have witnessed nearly nightly clashes between Palestinians and Israeli civilians, as well as Israeli security forces, in and around the Old City. Meanwhile, settlers and other Israeli civilians perpetrated 26 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in 18 injuries and damage to property. Palestinians perpetrated 31 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the West Bank, resulting in injuries in four cases and in damage to property in the rest.

On 28 September, some 70 Israeli settlers attacked the Palestinian village of Mufaqara, I-Rakeez and Al-Tuwani, in the South Hebron Hills. The settlers injured nine Palestinians, including children, killed livestock and damaged vehicles and homes, as well as community infrastructure. A 3-year-old Palestinian boy, hit in the head by stones as he slept, was hospitalized with a skull fracture. In related clashes, 20 Palestinians were injured by Israeli Defense Forces. Palestinians also threw stones towards Israelis during the incident, injuring one soldier.

On 29 September, Israeli Foreign Minister Mr. Yair Lapid condemned the attacks tweeting, "This violent incident is horrific and it is terror." He called the perpetrators "a violent and dangerous fringe" and said Israel had "a responsibility to bring them to justice". Israeli security forces arrested at least six Israelis in relation to those incidents, including two children, as well as three Palestinians. And at least four Israelis have reportedly since being arrested, and later released. An investigation by the Israeli authorities is ongoing. I welcome the swift condemnation of the attacks from the Israeli Foreign Minister and underscore that all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice.

Since the annual olive harvest began a week ago, some 1,200 olive trees have reportedly been vandalized by settlers. On 15 October, some 40 settlers attacked Palestinian farmers east of Yasuf village, north of Salfit, injuring a Palestinian woman with pepper spray and three others by throwing stones. I call on Israel to take all the necessary steps to fulfil its obligation to protect Palestinian civilians from violence, including by Israeli settlers, and to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for such attacks.

On 4 and 18 October, the Israel Civil Administration held discussions on objections to two settlement housing plans, for a total of nearly 3,500 units in the strategic E-1 Area in the West Bank. I am concerned that Israeli authorities continue to consider plans for constructions in E-1. If built, those units would sever the connection between the northern and the southern West Bank, significantly undermining the chances for establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian State as a part of the negotiated two-State solution. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace.

On 5 October, the Jerusalem Magistrates' Court granted the appeal of a Jewish Israeli who had been expelled from the Holy Esplanade for praying in violation of Israeli police regulations that allow only Muslims to pray at the site. The Court's decision was condemned as a violation of the status quo by the Palestinian, Egyptian and Jordanian Governments, by Palestinian factions and by Muslim and Christian leaders in Jerusalem and throughout the region. The police appealed the decision to the Jerusalem District Court, which overturned the lower court decision and reinstated the appellant's temporary visit ban on 8 October. In a statement released the same day, Israel's Public Security Minister reiterated that the status quo must be observed, adding that any changes to the existing arrangement "would endanger public safety and could cause a flare-up". I welcome that statement by the Israeli Minister. And I reiterate that all sides must respect and uphold the status quo at the holy sites.

Israeli demolitions and confiscations of Palestinian homes and other structures continued during the reporting period. Overall, the Israeli authorities demolished, seized and forced owners to demolish 18 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and seven in occupied East Jerusalem, displacing five Palestinians, including three women and one child. The demolitions were carried out owing to the lack of Israeli building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. On 29 September, Israel's High Court of Justice granted a request by the State of Israel to postpone to March 2022 its response to a petition to implement an eviction notice against the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar, in Area C of the West Bank. In its request, the Government cited the coronavirus disease pandemic and the current diplomatic security situation, adding that there had been significant progress towards an agreement that could avoid a demolition.

On 4 October, Israel's Supreme Court presented a proposal to four Palestinian families facing evictions in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah and to the Israeli settler cooperation seeking to evict them. The proposal would significantly postpone eviction efforts, while requiring the families to pay a nominal annual rent to the settler cooperation. The Court specified that the agreement would in no way prejudice ongoing legal proceedings to determine ownership of the properties. If the parties do not reach an agreement by 2 November, the Court stated, it would issue a ruling. I urge Israel to cease demolitions and evictions in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law. In a welcome development earlier today, Israeli and Palestinian officials announced that some 4,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank without proper documentation would be registered in the Palestinian population registry and receive identity documents.

The PA's fiscal situation is reaching a breaking point. Expenditures far exceed its revenues, and the gap is growing. Donor support, including direct budget support, has continued its multi-year decline. Estimates suggest that the PA will have a 2021 budget deficit of approximately \$800 million. That would nearly double the 2020 gap, and, even with donor support and emergency

measures, we will see that situation continue. The borrowing capacity of the PA with banks has been exhausted.

Together with other long-standing fiscal leakages that are contributing to the financial crisis, Israel continues to deduct millions of dollars a month from clearance revenue transfers in response to Palestinian payments to security prisoners, their families and the families of those killed in the context of attacks. Israel's recent loan of 500 million shekels against future Palestinian revenue was critical, but it only temporarily delays the looming crisis and does not address the structural impediments imposed on the Palestinian economy.

Significant reforms and policy changes by both Israelis and Palestinians must be implemented to address the structural challenges. Such reforms could and should be met with increased support from the international donor community. That will form a key part of the upcoming agenda of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, scheduled to take place in Oslo in November.

Efforts continue to stabilize the situation in Gaza and support recovery and reconstruction following the May escalation. The United Nations has launched reconstruction efforts for severely damaged housing units. Preparations for additional reconstruction have begun with assistance from Qatar after the lifting of some restrictions on the entry of construction materials by Israeli authorities. Up to 1,800 of the more than 2,000 destroyed and damaged civilian homes will be rebuilt in the first phase. In addition, Egypt began repairing one of Gaza's main coastal roads in late September.

During the month of September, nearly 7,000 truckloads of goods were sent to Gaza through the Israel-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing — approximately 80 per cent of the pre-escalation monthly average. About 2,000 truckloads entered through the Egyptian-controlled Rafah crossing, marking one of the highest recorded volumes of entering goods. In addition, as of 18 October, more than 6,000 permits had been issued for Gaza merchants and traders to enter into Israel — a critical contribution to boosting the local economy, which can be expanded.

While I welcome the issuance of permits and improvements in the movement of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip, much more is needed to facilitate sustainable access. I reiterate that the Gaza reconstruction mechanism remains best-placed to enable the entry of the accountable delivery of items and materials that would otherwise not be allowed into the Strip.

I remain concerned about the continued budgetary shortfall of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and I welcome the recently announced contributions from key donors. However, UNRWA continues to lack the necessary funds to sustain its critical programmes for the rest of this year. UNRWA remains indispensable with regard to regional stability and must have the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate.

...

We can no longer lurch from crisis to crisis. Our approach cannot be to address the current situation piecemeal, incident by incident on a short-term, day-to-day basis, as stand-alone issues. A broader package of parallel steps by the Government of Israel, the PA and the international community is needed. Such a framework should begin to address key political, security and

economic challenges that are preventing progress. Such efforts are urgently needed and will require a clear political commitment and involvement from the Government of Israel, the PA and the international community.

We must begin to restore hope in a peaceful and sustainable negotiated resolution to the conflict. Despite the enormity of the current political, economic and humanitarian challenges, we cannot afford to be pessimistic or passive. I welcome the efforts of the envoys of the Middle East Quartet, including in the call held on 14 October. I encourage both parties to urgently implement positive and significant policy shifts to address the security situation, improve the Palestinian economy and strengthen Palestinian governance and institutions. I also urge Israeli and Palestinian authorities to find additional avenues for cooperation, including on the implementation of existing agreements.

That is not the endgame, but rather key steps in the process that can and must lead us back to genuine negotiations, end the occupation and allow for the realization of a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, international law, United Nations resolutions and previous agreements. We must build consensus in support of a broader framework for engagement, or face an increasingly desperate reality shaped by extremist voices and unilateral actions that will heighten the risk of Palestinians, Israelis and the region entering into a more severe conflict. The United Nations is actively engaged in advancing those efforts, including through the Middle East Quartet, key regional partners and Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

V. CHAIR OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE SUBMITS STATEMENT TO SECURITY COUNCIL FOR OPEN DEBATE

On 19 October the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Amb. Cheikh Niang, addressed the following [statement](#) to the Security Council under agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.”

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.

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.

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.

VI. WORLD BANK ALLOCATES US\$ 80 MILLION TO BOOST PALESTINIAN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND LIVELIHOODS

On 21 October, the West Bank and Gaza office of the World Bank issued the following [press release](#):

The World Bank’s Board recommended today the allocation of US\$80 million to support the economic welfare and durable opportunities for the Palestinian people. The funds, in the form of grants, will be transferred from the Bank’s own income to the dedicated Trust Fund for Gaza and the West Bank.

“In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, now in its second year, the impact of May 2021 conflict with Gaza, and the fiscal distress, the new replenishment comes at a critical time to help support Palestinian economic development while responding to these shocks to the economy and society,” said Kanthan Shankar, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza.

The funds will support the Bank’s assistance strategy, aimed at strengthening resilience and providing much needed support for social protection. The strategy is aligned with the World Bank Group’s crisis response to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. It also supports the recovery efforts in Gaza through cash-for-work opportunities for poor and vulnerable populations and through the second phase of an energy sector multi-phase programmatic approach.

The funds will also contribute to a well-connected Palestinian economy that is more integrated into the regional and global markets with a particular focus on energy trade and digital connectivity. It will be particularly be beneficial to private sector growth, including tech startups and the IT services sector. These efforts will help foster job creation and sustainable opportunities that are at the core of the World Bank strategy.

Building on its partnership with the Palestinian Authority and coordination with donors, including through its analytical work, the World Bank Group will work with Palestinian policymakers to support the reform agenda in the priority areas of governance and public financial management, gender reform, and climate change, as well as building investor confidence in the business environment.

VII. SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CALL ON ISRAEL TO RELEASE OR CHARGE FIVE PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKERS

On 21 October Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Mr. Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Ms. Elina Steinerte (Chair-Rapporteur), Ms. Miriam Estrada-Castillo (Vice-chairperson), Ms. Leigh Toomey, Mr. Mumba Malila, and Ms. Priya Gopalan, of the Working Group on arbitrary detention, issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#).

Expressing grave fear for the lives of five Palestinians currently on hunger strike in Israeli prisons, UN experts today called on Israel to either release or charge the prisoners, and to completely end its unlawful practice of administrative detention.

“In violation of international law, Israel continues to use administrative detention to imprison more than 500 Palestinians – including six children – without charges, without trials, without convictions, all based on classified secret information that the detainees have no access to,” the experts said. “They have no recourse to challenging these undisclosed allegations, and they do not know when, or if, they are going to be released.

Borrowing from incarceration practices first employed by the British mandate administration in Palestine in the 1930s, the Israeli government has used administrative detention as a frequent method of political control since its occupation of the Palestinian territory began in 1967. The Israeli military can hold Palestinian detainees for six-month periods, which may be renewed and extended indefinitely. While judicial review is available, this is held in front of an Israeli military judge, where international minimum standards of rights, evidence and procedural fairness do not apply. Successful challenges to administrative detention orders are extremely uncommon.

““These practices would appear to be arbitrary detention, which is strictly prohibited under international law, including international humanitarian law”, said the experts. “And the arbitrary detention of children is particularly abhorrent, violating the minimum standards established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

The experts said that Israel’s’ practice of administrative detention drives prisoners to desperate measures, even risking their lives, to bring attention to their plight.

The five hunger strikers, all men in their twenties and thirties, have been refusing food for between 58 and 99 days to protest being held in administrative detention for months or even years at a time.

Two of the men, Kayed Al-Fasous and Miqdad Al-Qawasameh, are said to be in imminent danger of death. Mr. Al-Fasous who was reportedly previously held in harsh conditions in solitary confinement, now is in Barzelai hospital. Mr. Al Qawasameh was transferred to Kaplan Hospital after his health deteriorated; he has been in intensive care there since 19 October. On 7 October and 14 October, the Israeli High Court of Justice suspended the administrative detention orders of Miqdad Al-Qawasameh and Kayed Al-Fasous, but as the the suspension does not mean their release, they decided to continue with their strike despite their very frail condition.

Two other men, Alaa Al-Araj, and Hisham Ismail Abu Hawash were transferred on 19 October to Israeli hospitals after their health deteriorated. The fifth, Mr. Shadi Abu Aka is currently in Ramleh prison clinic.

The experts noted that, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, an occupying power is not permitted to transfer prisoners from the occupied territory to detention centres in its territory. “The United Nations has regularly observed that Israel is in violation of this legal duty, and has called upon it to comply with its obligation, but to no avail.”

“As we have done many times before, we once again call on Israel either to charge and try, or release, all of the administrative detainees,” the experts said. “In international law, administrative detention is permitted only in exceptional circumstances, and only for short periods of time. Israel’s practices exceed all of the international legal boundaries.”

The experts also called upon Israel to end its harsh detention conditions of Palestinian prisoners. “In particular, we insist that the imposition of solitary confinement on detainees already weakened by months of hunger strike, must stop immediately.”

VIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND CONCERNED BY SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

On 24 October, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Tor Wennesland issued the following [statement](#).

Today, the Israeli authorities announced tenders for the construction of more than 1,300 housing units in the occupied West Bank.

I am deeply concerned by continued Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law, remain a substantial obstacle to peace, and must cease immediately.

IX. UN RESIDENT AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR HASTINGS CONCERNED BY THE ISRAELI DESIGNATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN OPT

On 25 October, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Lynn Hastings issued the following [statement](#).

I am concerned by the recent designation of six Palestinian Human Rights and Humanitarian organizations, by Israel’s Ministry of Defense under the 2016 Anti-Terrorism Law and by the relevant allegations.

These designations add to increasing pressures on civil society organisations across the oPt more broadly and have the potential to seriously undermine their humanitarian, development and human rights work.

In addressing this issue, I am engaging with the Israeli authorities to learn more about the allegations.

X. EU SPOKESPERSON ON NEW SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

On 25 October, the European Union Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy issued the following [statement](#).

On Sunday, the Israeli authorities announced the publication of tenders for the construction of more than 1,300 housing units in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and another tender for the construction of an additional 83 units in Givat Hamatos in East Jerusalem.

Settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the parties. The European Union has consistently made clear that it will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by both sides.

We call upon the Government of Israel to halt settlement construction and to not proceed with the announced tenders.

XI. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR “BRAVE” NEW APPROACH TO END ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE

On 25 October, Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, addressed the General Assembly’s Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Issues) Committee as reflected in the following [press release](#).

A new “imaginative and brave” playbook is needed to achieve the globally agreed goal to end the 54-year-old Israeli occupation and secure Palestine’s self-determination, a UN human rights expert told the General Assembly today.

“Yesterday’s playbook ... has only led to repeated diplomatic cul-de-sacs, while enabling the patterns of human rights abuses and an endless occupation to continue largely unimpeded,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. “This has been a political failure of the first order.”

Lynk’s annual report to the General Assembly focused on the effectiveness of four of the influential international actors involved in the Middle East process and the supervision of the Israeli occupation: the United States, the European Union, the World Bank and the Quartet (UN, EU, USA and Russia).

“By not imposing a meaningful cost on Israel for its endless occupation, the policies of these four actors – inadvertently or not – have been contributing to the consolidation of Israeli control over the occupied Palestinian territory,” Lynk said.

“The occupation is more embedded than ever. The living conditions of the Palestinians, let alone their political future, have become even more precarious. Israel’s defiance has gone almost completely unchecked. The peace process is moribund, if not comatose, and there is no serious talk about reviving it. We are witnessing not a Palestinian state-in-the-making, but the strengthening of a one state reality of unequal rights.

“Recent trends on the ground are getting worse, not better,” Lynk warned. “The Israeli settlement population is approaching 700,000 settlers. The network of roads and utilities connecting the settlements to Israel and each other is expanding. Settler attacks against Palestinians are sustaining a coercive environment. Gaza remains under a tight blockade, which deepens its impoverishment and distress. And the amount of violence required by Israel to maintain the occupation contains to rise.”

Ending the longest occupation in the modern world, enabling Palestinian self-determination and providing peace, security and a prosperous and shared future for both Israelis and Palestinians requires the international community to adopt the following five principles to achieving the international community’s goals of peace, security and justice:

- Because of the vast asymmetry in power between Israel and the Palestinians, active international intervention is indispensable;
- The framework for fully ending the occupation must employ a rights-based approach, anchored in international law and human rights;
- The end goal must be the realization of Palestinian self-determination;
- Israel has been a bad-faith occupier; and
- The occupation must end with all deliberate speed.

Lynk called on the international community, and its leading actors, to enforce its own rules and resolutions respecting the Israeli occupation. “We cannot continue to tolerate the intolerable: the imposition of a colonial reality in Palestine in the 21st century,” the UN expert said.

“We need a rights-based approach, but we also need imaginative and brave diplomacy that is willing to ask the honest questions as to how this five-decade-old occupation has turned into a de facto annexation, and worse.”

XII. SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONDEMN ISRAEL'S DESIGNATION OF PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AS TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

On 25 October, Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Ms. Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism; Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Ms. Melissa Upreti (Chair), Ms. Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Vice-Chair), Ms. Elizabeth Broderick, Ms. Ivana Radačić, and Ms. Meskerem Geset Techane, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Ms. Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; Mr. Clément N. Voule, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to peaceful assembly and association; Mr. Surya Deva (Chairperson), Ms. Elżbieta Karska (Vice-Chairperson), Mr. Githu Muigai, Mr. Dante Pesce, and Ms. Anita Ramasastry of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights; and Ms. Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; issued the following [press release](#).

UN human rights experts today strongly and unequivocally condemned the decision by the Israeli Minister of Defence, Benny Gantz, to designate six Palestinian human rights and civil society groups as terrorist organisations.

“This designation is a frontal attack on the Palestinian human rights movement, and on human rights everywhere,” said the experts. “Silencing their voices is not what a democracy adhering to well-accepted human rights and humanitarian standards would do. We call upon the international community to defend the defenders.”

The experts said that anti-terrorism legislation is designed for a specific and restricted purpose, and must not be used to unjustifiably undermine civil liberties or to curtail the legitimate work of human rights organisations. The United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have all been clear about the requirement to apply counter-terrorism measures in a manner which is consistent with international law and does not violate States international obligations, they said.

“The misuse of counter-terrorism measures in this way by the government of Israel undermines the security of all,” the experts said. “The freedoms of association and expression must be fully respected in order to enable civil society to perform its indispensable work, and cannot be undermined by the manifestly egregious misuse of counterterrorism and security legislation.”

The six Palestinian organizations are Addameer, Al-Haq, Defense for Children International – Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, the Bisan Center for Research and Development, and the Union of Palestinian Women Committees. Among the communities that they work with are Palestinian women and girls, children, peasant families, prisoners and civil society activists, all of whom face increased levels of discrimination and even violence.

“These organisations speak the language of universal human rights,” the experts said. “They use a rights-based approach to their work, including a gendered analysis, to document human rights abuses of all kinds in Palestine, including business-related human rights abuses.”

This designation would effectively ban the work of these human rights defenders, and allow the Israeli military to arrest their staff, shutter their offices, confiscate their assets and prohibit their activities and human rights work. The experts note their concern that at least for one of these organisations, this decision may have been taken as a form of reprisal for cooperation with UN entities.

“The Israeli military has frequently targeted human rights defenders in recent years, as its occupation has deepened, its defiance of international law has continued and its record of human rights violations has worsened,” the experts said. “While international and Israeli human rights organisations have faced heavy criticism, legislative restrictions and even deportations, Palestinian human rights defenders have always encountered the severest constraints.”

The human rights experts called upon the international community to use its full range of political and diplomatic tools to request that Israel review and reverse this decision. “These civil society organisations are the canaries in the human rights coalmine, alerting us to the patterns of violations, reminding the international community of its obligations to ensure accountability, and providing voices for those who have none,” the experts said.

XIII. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS BACHELET CALLS ISRAEL’S “TERRORISM” DESIGNATION AN UNJUSTIFIED ATTACK ON PALESTINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

On 26 October, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the following [press release](#).

Israel’s decision to designate six Palestinian civil society organizations as “terrorist organizations” is an attack on human rights defenders, on freedoms of association, opinion and expression and on the right to public participation, and should be immediately revoked, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said on Tuesday.

The organizations concerned* are some of the most reputable human rights and humanitarian groups in the occupied Palestinian territory and for decades have worked closely with the UN.

The designation decisions under the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016 are based on extremely vague or unsubstantiated reasons, including entirely peaceful and legitimate human rights activities, such as providing legal aid to Palestinians in detention, organizing activities for women in the West Bank and “promoting steps against Israel in the international arena.”

“Claiming rights before a UN or other international body is not an act of terrorism, advocating for the rights of women in the occupied Palestinian territory is not terrorism, and providing legal aid to detained Palestinians is not terrorism,” Bachelet said.

The High Commissioner reiterated that counter-terrorism legislation must not be applied to legitimate human rights and humanitarian work. The banning of organizations must not be used to suppress or deny the right to freedom of association, or to quash political dissent, silence unpopular views or limit the peaceful activities of civil society. The national authorities responsible for proscribing organizations must comply fully with the State’s international human rights

obligations, including by respecting the principles of legal certainty, proportionality, equality and non-discrimination.

“The organizations, who include some of the key partners of the UN Human Rights Office, face far-reaching consequences as a result of this arbitrary decision, as do the people who fund them and work with them,” Bachelet noted. “And the crucial work they perform for thousands of Palestinians risks being halted or severely restricted.”

The published designation decisions by the Israeli Minister of Defence state that the organizations are, or have become, the “arm” of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and that they obtained financial resources, which in practice reached the “[PFLP] terror activity” or supported their activities. There is no evidence presented to support these accusations, no information on the type of alleged “PFLP terror activity,” nor has any public process been conducted to establish the allegations.

Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016 sets out prison terms of between five and 25 years for staff and members of the designated organizations, provides for confiscation of assets, and closure of the organization. It also criminalizes the provision of support – including financial aid as well as publishing words of “praise, support or sympathy” – with between three to five years in prison.

“The designation decisions contravene the right to freedom of association of the individuals affected and more broadly have a chilling effect on human rights defenders and civic space. Any restrictions on the right to freedom of association must meet a strict test of necessity and proportionality,” the High Commissioner said. “In addition, these latest developments highlight how problematic Israel’s counter-terrorism law is, including its overly broad definition of terrorism, problems of due process and the manner in which it allows evidence to be kept secret.”

The designations against the six organizations on 19 October are the latest in a long-running series of actions to undermine and restrict human rights defenders and civil society organizations working for the human rights of Palestinians, including using military regulations to declare groups unlawful.

“Restricting the space for legitimate activities under international law is not only wrong but counter-productive, as it risks limiting the space for peaceful dialogue,” the High Commissioner said.

“Israel must ensure that human rights defenders are not detained, charged and convicted in relation to their legitimate work to protect and promote human rights. I call on the Israeli authorities to revoke their designations against Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organisations as terrorist organizations, as well as their declarations against those they deem to be ‘unlawful’,” Bachelet said.

**The organizations are: Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association; Al Haq; Defense for Children International – Palestine; Union of Agricultural Work Committees; Bisan Center for Research and Development; and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees.*

XIV. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE'S BUREAU EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN AT ISRAEL'S DESIGNATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY BODIES AS "TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS"

On 27 October, the Bureau of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following [statement](#).

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expresses its deep concern at Israel's decision of 22 October to designate as "terrorist organizations" six Palestinian human rights and humanitarian civil society organizations: Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association; Al Haq; Defense for Children International – Palestine; Union of Agricultural Work Committees; Bisan Center for Research and Development; and the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees.

Some of the organizations are long-standing, reputable and reliable partners of the Committee and of the United Nations, in advocating for the protection and promotion of the human rights of Palestinian men, women and children, assisting prisoners and upholding the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the face of violations perpetrated for decades by Israel, the occupying Power.

The work of those organizations, and that of many other Palestinian and Israeli civil society organizations, is essential to advancing human rights and respect for international law in collective efforts to achieve a just solution to the Palestine question and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace and security. For that reason, the Bureau calls upon Israel to respect the rights to freedom of association and expression, and to swiftly reverse its arbitrary designation of those groups as "terrorist organizations".

The Committee is determined to continue its regular engagement with civil society partners in the implementation of its mandate towards ending the occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, advancing the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, and realizing a two-State solution along the 1967 lines, based on international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and past agreements.

XV. EU SPOKESPERSON ON THE LISTING OF SIX PALESTINIAN NGOS AS TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

On 28 October, the European Union Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy issued the following [statement](#).

The European Union is proud of its continued support to civil society that contributes to peace efforts and confidence building between Israelis and Palestinians.

The EU takes very seriously the listing of six Palestinian organisations by Israel's Ministry of Defence. These listings have far-reaching consequences for the organisations in political, legal and financial terms. We will be engaging Israeli authorities for more information regarding the basis for these designations. The EU has never and will never finance or support any terrorist organisations. It exercises maximum diligence to avoid any such situation and takes such

allegations extremely serious. If substantiated evidence were to be provided that any beneficiary has made an inappropriate use of EU funds, the EU would take action to recover these funds. Past allegations of the misuse of EU funds in relation to certain Palestinian CSO partners have not been substantiated.

A thriving civil society and respect for fundamental freedoms are corner stones of open democracies. Civil society is an essential contributor to good governance, human rights, international law, democratic values and sustainable development in the EU, in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere.
