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

Security Council
Seventy-sixth year

Identical letters dated 28 October 2021 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write again, just days since my letter of 22 October, because of the intensifying repression and attacks against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, as it persists in attempts to silence the exposure of its human rights violations and whitewash the colonial, apartheid reality it has created in Occupied Palestine.

It is past time to put a stop to such flagrant trampling of international law, human rights abuses and to such mockery of the international community. It is time for all law-abiding States to say: enough. A clear message must be sent that there will be no tolerance for continued Israeli violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and no acceptance of its perverse pretexts for the continuation of these violations, from its destructive settlement activities to its oppressive collective punishment of the Palestinian people and to its relentless suffocation of any and all advocacy aimed at promoting the realization of their rights and a just solution to their plight.

We are heartened by the broad international rejection of the recent Israeli military decree designating six Palestinian civil society organizations as so-called “terrorist organizations”. But more needs to be done to put a stop to the criminalization of legitimate, peaceful efforts to assist Palestinians, including children and women, and to advocate for respect for their rights, including the rights of refugees and prisoners, and for compliance with international law as it applies to this illegal occupation, which must be brought to an end.

These latest developments reveal again the extent to which Israel is willing to intimidate, smear and muzzle human rights defenders and humanitarians in order to undermine their invaluable work and conceal its crimes against the Palestinian people. We must recall here in specific terms Israel’s long record of disparagement of United Nations bodies, non-cooperation with United Nations mandate holders and Israel’s measures against civil society organizations, including deportation and issuance of travel bans, raids on their offices harassment and detention of their personnel.



It is a malicious form of aggression, offensive to the rule of law and to human rationale and dignity. If Palestine's representatives appeal to the international community to uphold responsibilities and legal obligations on the Palestine question, it is labelled "diplomatic terror"; if we seek the application of international law in the courts, including in the International Criminal Court, it is labelled "lawfare"; if legitimate civil society organizations seek to protect human rights and aid the victims of this cruel occupation, they are branded "terrorists".

But this is not new. It has been going on for decades, starting with the labelling of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a "terror organization"; to the narrative branding our entire people as "terrorists" and a "demographic threat"; to the characterization of any legitimate resistance to the occupation as "terror"; to the present-day attack on civil society and the freedom of expression and assembly. Israel's audacity in repeatedly doing this is without doubt emboldened by the lack of accountability for decades of violations, which has allowed it to believe that it is a State above the law and that it can peddle such defamatory allegations and illegal actions as justified on security and "self-defence" pretexts, even as so-called "counter-terrorism", without recourse for the victims. This is not normal behaviour for any law-abiding, democratic State.

We reiterate: this must be stopped. It is time for accountability and time to end the distortion, exploitation and breach of the law to serve this illegal occupation.

Continued inaction will only green-light Israel's intent to pursue and maintain oppression, colonization and apartheid, while intensifying the alarming trend of censoring those monitoring and reporting its violations and crimes. It is the shared responsibility of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to protect the voices of the voiceless and to put an end to such raging impunity. In this regard, we echo just some of the many calls for accountability and appeals by United Nations officials and experts, independent human rights and humanitarian organizations, legal scholars and academics worldwide:

Joint statement by United Nations special rapporteurs and human rights experts: "This designation is a frontal attack on the Palestinian human rights movement, and on human rights everywhere ... 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."

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet: "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 organizations as terrorist organizations, as well as their declarations against those they deem to be 'unlawful'."

Joint statement by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch: "For decades, Israeli authorities have systematically sought to muzzle human rights monitoring and punish those who criticize its repressive rule over Palestinians ... The decades-long failure of the international community to challenge grave Israeli human rights abuses and impose meaningful consequences for them has emboldened Israeli authorities to act in this brazen manner."

Joint statement by Israeli non-governmental organizations and human rights groups Adalah, Akevot, Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'Tselem, Bimkom, Breaking the Silence, Combatants for Peace, Emek Shaveh, Gisha, Hamoked, Haqel, Ir Amim, Kerem Navot, Machsom Watch, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Public Committee Against Torture, Rabbis for Human Rights, Yesh Din: "The Minister of Defense's designation of prominent Palestinian civil society

organizations, among them our colleagues in the Palestinian human rights community, as terrorist organizations, is a draconian measure that criminalizes critical human rights work.”

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor: “EuroMed Rights members in Palestine, Israel and Europe unequivocally condemn this dramatic step that has no other purpose than silencing the very voices that daily document, denounce and work against the Israeli policies of occupation, oppression and discrimination against Palestinians.”

American non-governmental organization the Carter Center: “The Israeli decision to criminalize these organizations is the latest chapter in a long campaign to undermine and defund human rights organizations. The decision was based on undisclosed evidence, giving the rights groups no possibility to rebut the accusation.”

We reiterate our firm solidarity with the targeted civil society organizations – Al-Haq, Addameer, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense For Children International-Palestine and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees – and call upon the international community, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, to uphold the highest standards of adherence to international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in order to protect those who are tirelessly defending and advocating for the rights and principles on which the United Nations is built.

This includes defence of the foundational principles of the right of peoples to self-determination and prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force. The mere existence of this 54-year belligerent occupation, let alone the countless violations underpinning it, is an affront to the international rules-based order and all those who adhere to it. The international community therefore cannot remain passive as Israel, the occupying Power, proceeds with the construction of thousands more colonial dwellings in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Just yesterday, 27 October, the Israeli government advanced its plans to illegally construct another 3,144 settlement units in settlements across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The illegality of these actions is unquestionable and the pretexts used by Israel patently false. There is no such thing as “natural growth” in colonial settlements. They are illegal, should never have been built there and should be dismantled. If these settlements are not expanded, it will not be possible to transfer more Israeli settlers to the Palestinian land. But if they are, this will enable the transfer of thousands more Israeli settlers, further embedding this illegal occupation and destroying the two-State solution.

By its actions, it is clear that the occupying Power remains unmoved by mere condemnations that lack any measures of accountability for its blatant defiance of international law and Security Council resolutions. There are now nearly 700,000 illegally transferred Israeli settlers living in nearly 300 illegal settlements and outposts scattered throughout the occupied West Bank, which are designed to strategically fragment and shred Palestinian territorial contiguity for the purpose of maintaining Israeli control over the territory and its people, i.e. annexation and colonial domination by one group over another, an apartheid reality that should have no place in the modern world.

We thus call once again upon the international community to act with concrete measures to confront and bring a halt to all such settlement activities. Action must be taken in line with international law, including Security Council resolutions, including the full implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), including measures in line with the obligation of distinction, as stipulated in operative paragraph 5 of the resolution.

There must be consequences for these grave breaches; this is the only way to stop such impunity.

All existing diplomatic, political, and legal mechanisms, including via the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, must be pursued in order to end impunity and ensure accountability. Let us be clear about what this means: the Security Council is not being asked to resort to extraordinary lengths to hold Israel accountable, but to simply have the will to respect and follow through on existing frameworks and rules of international law aimed at ending this historic injustice and longest belligerent occupation in modern history, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The erosion of adherence to international law, coupled with the intensity of the above-mentioned repression and colonial actions, attest to Israel's intent to steal more Palestinian land, but without its people. Regardless of who leads the Israeli government, it is clear there is no change in its illegal behaviour. Moreover, regardless of how many statements are issued condemning Israel's repeated violations, until real measures of accountability are undertaken, this occupation will continue to be entrenched, inflicting suffering on millions of Palestinians and precluding the realization of a just peace and lasting security. Time is of the essence as the status quo is unjustifiable and untenable, making international action imperative. It is incumbent upon the Security Council in particular to do all in its power to ensure that both change and progress are possible.

As recently stressed by Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk, "yesterday's playbook has only led to repeated diplomatic culs-de-sac, while enabling the patterns of human rights abuses and an endless occupation to continue largely unimpeded ... We cannot continue to tolerate the intolerable: the imposition of a colonial reality in Palestine in the twenty-first century."

The question we need to ask ourselves today is whether the people of Palestine, who continue to endure the suffering widely documented and recognized by the international community, will ever receive the justice they deserve. Over 54 years of this occupation have proven that when international law is defied and accountability is absent, a culture of impunity will prevail, destroying lives, the prospects for peace and, likewise, the foundations of international law and credibility and authority of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the United Nations.

While we welcome and underscore all principled statements in these recent days condemning and rejecting Israel's illegal settlement plans and repression of Palestinian civil society, among its countless other violations at this moment, we must reiterate that what is urgently needed now are actions that translate these words into meaningful and practical steps towards bringing an end to these grave violations against the Palestinian people, protecting them and their rights, and salvaging the diminishing hopes and horizon for a just peace.

This letter is in follow-up to our 734 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 22 October 2021 (A/ES-10/881-S/2021/891) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Riyad Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer
