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

Security Council
Seventy-seventh year

Identical letters dated 1 April 2022 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

The situation in Occupied Palestine is further destabilizing as Israel, the occupying Power, intensifies its repression and attacks against the Palestinian people.

All of this is happening in grave breach of the law and despite repeated international calls for a halt to such illegal Israeli policies and for all efforts to avert further fuelling tensions and provocation of religious sensitivities as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins and the Jewish holiday of Passover and the Christian holiday of Easter approach.

The escalation of Israel's lethal and destructive actions in just the first three months of 2022 paints a clear picture of its real intentions: entrenching its illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime. Israel is doing so in full view of the international community and with its full knowledge, confident in the assumption that it will suffer no consequence for its crimes. The current dangerous trajectory must be addressed with urgency and utmost seriousness as Israel is proving daily that, absent accountability, it will continue killing, maiming and displacing Palestinians daily and continue destroying all prospects for a just and secure peace.

In this regard, I must inform you of the following recent developments:

Israeli occupation forces launched a punitive military raid on Jenin refugee camp yesterday, killing two Palestinians and injuring 14 other civilians. Videos of the raid showed Yazeed al-Saadi, age 23, being shot and killed by Israeli occupation forces who surrounded him as he laid motionless on the ground. Yazeed bled to death after being shot in the back of the head while Israeli occupation forces prevented medics from reaching him.

Moments later, 16-year-old Sanad Abu Attiyeh approached Yazeed to render aid and was killed when Israeli occupation forces fired live ammunition at the teenager. According to Defense for Children International-Palestine, Sanad was instantly killed after being shot directly in the chest and the bullet exited out his back. Israeli



occupation forces prevented medics from reaching the two victims, only allowing ambulances to reach the scene after both had died, in grave breach of international humanitarian law.

Sanad is the fifth Palestinian child killed by Israeli occupation forces since the start of this year, another victim of Israel's routine use of lethal force against Palestinian civilians in circumstances amounting to extrajudicial or wilful killings. Moreover, both Yazeed and Sanad were quickly buried in fear of having their bodies abducted and withheld from their families, a sadistic policy routinely carried out by Israeli occupation forces after murdering Palestinians.

Today, yet another Palestinian was shot and killed by Israeli occupation forces in Al-Khalil (Hebron). Ahmad al-Atrash, age 29, was taking part in a weekly protest against the Israeli occupation when he was shot directly in the head by Israeli soldiers. Ahmad's killing reaffirms the extent to which lethal force by Israeli occupation forces is normalized and encouraged, as the 24 Palestinians, including children, killed by Israeli occupation forces since the start of 2022 have been targeted with direct gunshots to the head or chest, exposing the occupation's blatant disregard for life.

Despite attempts by Israel to justify these killings on the pretext of "self-defence", there can be absolutely no moral or legal justification for the killing of children by heavily armed insecure soldiers. Israel's routine killing of Palestinian children should remind the international community, in particular the Security Council, that children are protected under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and other provisions of international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, the repeated claims that Israeli soldiers are "defending themselves" ignore the fact that they are there to impose an occupation, illegally and forcibly, with no sovereign right to be there, no less having a right to self-defence as combatants from the very people they are occupying and brutalizing, including children.

Israel also continues its attacks on civilian and humanitarian installations. During the raid on Jenin, Israeli occupation forces fired tear-gas canisters at a hospital, threatening the lives of vulnerable patients. Intensive care units and rooms with incubators for premature newborns were filled with tear-gas smoke, forcing nurses to relocate the babies to underequipped rooms.

Hours after the raid, Nidal Jaafra, age 30, was shot and killed in Bethlehem by an Israeli settler claiming an alleged attack. Nidal's killing came hours after the Prime Minister of Israel called upon Israelis to arm themselves, effectively encouraging the killing of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

Under this same pretext and with the same support, Israeli settlers continue to rampage across Palestinian towns and villages, terrorizing residents, causing casualties and damage to crops and properties. In the recent period, large-scale and coordinated attacks by mobs of Israeli settlers have occurred in numerous areas. Just yesterday, armed settler groups launched caravans of buses containing weapons, knives, gasoline and other objects with the intent to cause harm to Palestinians. These caravans, escorted by Israeli occupation forces in the middle of the night, resulted in dozens of settler attacks near Nablus and Salfit.

In the village of Lubban al-Sharqiyah, near Nablus, gangs of armed settlers uprooted nearly 170 olive trees, hurled stones at homes and windows and burned vehicles after pouring gasoline and setting them on fire. In the village of Marda, near Salfit, residents are facing daily settler terror as windows near children's beds are being shattered and vehicles belonging to ordinary families are being burned. In the village of Qaryut, settlers have set up dozens of caravans on privately-owned Palestinian land with the aim of establishing an outpost between the illegal

settlements of “Eli” and “Shilo”. Both settlements were built on Palestinian land stolen from nearby villages. Today, Qaryut is encircled by three illegal Israeli settlements, whose settler populations are notoriously known for incitement, violence and terrorism.

Such attacks are coordinated between Israeli occupation forces and settler extremists and increasing in frequency and scope, aimed to entrench Israel’s colonial occupation and apartheid regime. As Israeli human rights group B’Tselem has stressed: “Israel benefits from the repercussions, as settler violence has gradually dispossessed Palestinians of more and more areas in the West Bank, paving the way for a state takeover of land and resources.” This is the engine for what B’Tselem has rightly identified as Israel’s aim of “geographically and demographically engineering space” to ensure its control and “Jewish supremacy” in all of the land.

In this regard, yesterday, extremist Israeli politician Itamar Ben-Gvir, a Kahanist known for his racist views and for promoting the mass displacement of Palestinians in Jerusalem, forced his way into Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif. Surrounded by more than a dozen armed forces and a group of settlers, Ben-Gvir harassed worshippers and vowed to trespass again during Ramadan, deliberately aiming to stir religious tensions near Jerusalem’s holy sites. Here we must warn that Israeli settler incursions into Haram al-Sharif are planned to take place during Ramadan, with far-right politicians calling upon settlers to ignite confrontations with Palestinian worshippers and residents in the Old City.

The Security Council must demand an end to all of such provocations and violations by Israel, the occupying Power, and its extremist settlers. Moreover, it must demand respect by Israel of international law and of the Council’s own resolutions and reaffirm the full respect of the historic and legal status quo at Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif. We recall once again that Israel is the occupying Power and has no sovereignty rights whatsoever in occupied East Jerusalem, including in the Old City and at its holy sites, regardless of any unilateral claims, declarations, so-called “Basic Law” or otherwise.

Against the backdrop of these disturbing developments and the prevailing reality on the ground – one of an illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime – we reiterate our perennial call for international action to uphold the law, including measures to hold Israel accountable for its crimes and to ensure protection to the Palestinian people under its occupation and domination.

Repeated calls for “the parties to return to negotiations” that ignore these realities – including the fact that Israel has openly declared its rejection of negotiations and of Palestinian rights and statehood – are disingenuous at best and destructive at worst. Only serious, collective efforts, in line with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, can ever rectify this abhorrent reality and bring an end to this prolonged injustice and the endless cycles of violence and human suffering it is causing.

It is time to stop giving cover to this illegal occupation and time for the international community to fulfil the obligations triggered by this reality. It is time for responsible action by all States and organizations to hold Israel accountable. It is time for concrete actions aimed at decolonization and dismantling a blatant apartheid regime. Such actions would constitute a tangible contribution, beyond words and calls, towards ending this illegal occupation and achieving a just solution to the Palestine question that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, freedom and return.

Calling for negotiations on the one hand, without doing even the bare minimum to uphold the law on the other hand, will never bring about a different reality. The

past decades have clearly shown that, without pressure and a cost imposed by the international community, Israel will never change its ways, will never respect international law. Rather, it will carry on, without hesitation or remorse, with its illegal occupation and apartheid policies, depriving an entire nation of their rights and homeland, making a mockery of international law and obstructing peace and security.

The selective application of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations resolutions, is indefensible. It is time to stop exempting Israel from its obligations to respect the law and from consequences for its continued failure to comply. It is time for the international community, including the Security Council, to act consistently and responsibly to protect all civilian lives, uphold the rule of law and human rights and safeguard international peace and security in all cases, including in Palestine.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 746 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 16 March 2022 (A/ES-10/893-S/2022/199), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter 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