

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 21 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to you with the utmost urgency regarding the recent escalation in Jerusalem and particularly on the Temple Mount. During these special times, when the three monotheistic religions celebrate their holidays, it is deeply disturbing to watch as Palestinian extremists hijack these celebrations and turn them violent, risking civilian lives as well as further escalation. These recent violent provocations are the direct result of weeks of incitement by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority leading up to the holidays.

In the early hours of Friday, 15 April, Palestinian extremists – wearing face masks, waving flags of the terrorist organization, Hamas, and bearing stones, large rocks, rods and fireworks – ascended the Temple Mount and marched into the compound of the Aqsa Mosque. In the following hours, these extremists damaged and desecrated the compound by barricading it, as well as hurling rocks and lighting fireworks, all for the sole purpose of escalating the situation and creating provocation, at a cost of freedom of worship and the sanctity of the holy sites. One of the main targets of these violent Palestinian extremists are Jewish worshippers at the Wailing Wall, who have also come to pray in the Old City during the Passover holiday.

In order to maintain the freedom of worship for all religions, which was threatened by the actions of the Palestinian extremists described above, Israeli police were forced to enter the grounds to disperse the crowd and remove the stones and rocks, in order to prevent further violence. This was done after efforts by Israeli police vis-à-vis third parties to try to have the extremists removed from the mosque had been exhausted, and Waqf authorities confirmed that attempts to remove those violent actors had proved unsuccessful. Israeli police moved at that point to remove the violent extremists so as not to threaten the safety of the over 50,000 Muslim worshippers. The quick and responsible action taken by Israel restored calm, after which the forces left the area, allowing the immediate resumption of full and free worship to continue unrestricted, with the approximately 50,000 Muslim worshippers carrying on with their Ramadan prayers. I emphasize that the actions taken by Israel in this incident were taken solely in order to stop the extremists who obstructed and threatened the security, safety and freedom of worship of their fellow Muslims, as well as Christians and Jews.

The desecration of the Muslim holy sites by Palestinian extremists is ongoing. Again, both yesterday and today, a number of violent actors arrived at the Temple Mount and entered the Aqsa Mosque with stones, large rocks and Molotov cocktails, which they pelted outside from within the confines of the holy site. One of the



Molotov cocktails fell short of its intended target and set one of the mosque's prayer rugs on fire. Israeli police were forced to respond from outside the mosque in order to protect the peaceful Muslim worshippers and allow for order to be restored.

Israel has guaranteed, and always will guarantee, the freedom of worship for all religions. In recent weeks, and in the face of an escalating wave of terrorism, riots and incitement, Israel has maintained restraint and has facilitated worship by tens of thousands of Muslims on the Temple Mount. In the weeks leading up to the holidays, Israeli authorities took a number of confidence-building measures vis-à-vis the Palestinian population in an effort to ease tensions and were in constant contact with key actors on the ground in an effort to maintain calm and facilitate open communication and effective coordination during the holiday period. The latest actions by Israel on Friday were taken after intensive dialogue with the Waqf, and as a last resort, to restore calm, which then allowed normal prayers to be resumed.

In this context, we must note the uptick in Palestinian incitement in recent weeks. The Governor of Janin and other senior Fatah officials have publicly embraced and praised the perpetrators of the recent bloody terrorist attacks in the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak, while Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and others have also posted messages on social media commending and encouraging the ruthless attacks against Israeli civilians in Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak, as well as in Hadera and Beersheba. This massive disinformation campaign by Palestinian officials and terrorist organizations in the press and on social media is ongoing. While Israel is no stranger to these types of campaign, especially during times of unrest, it is regretful to note statements by Palestinian Authority and Jordanian officials, who failed to condemn these brazen acts of violent extremism in recent days, opting instead to echo distorted narratives regarding the recent developments in Jerusalem, which destabilizes the situation at the holy sites, encourages and incites violent extremism and hatred against Jews and ultimately runs counter to their historic duty. Every responsible partner must recognize this and not take part in spreading completely false information, which only inflames the atmosphere. Statements supporting violent action, including the throwing of rocks on Jewish worshippers at their holiest site on a religious holiday, lead only to further escalation and needless bloodshed. At the same time, we have not seen any Palestinian statements denouncing the violence or calling for calm. It is critical that the international community make clear to the Palestinian side that it is crucial to see responsible leadership in actions and in words and that it expects no less than that, given the precarious situation on the ground.

Inflammatory rhetoric, incitement and hate speech, whether by Palestinian officials, media outlets or non-governmental organizations, have a direct and deadly effect on the ground. On Sunday, 19 April, Palestinians hurled stones at buses carrying Jewish worshippers in the Old City of Jerusalem, wounding several civilians, including a 13-year-old Israeli girl. These and other attacks by Palestinians are the direct result of a culture of incitement and instigation, either promoted willingly by some or silently acquiesced to by others.

We are also gravely concerned about the potential for Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and other terrorist groups to use these events in Jerusalem as an excuse to escalate the situation in the Gaza Strip. Indeed, we have already witnessed in recent days a number of rocket attacks from Gaza targeting Israeli civilians. Israel responded with great restraint and carried out a targeted response in order to protect its citizens, as is our right. It is crucial that the international community unequivocally condemn such rocket attacks against Israeli civilians by Hamas and other terrorist groups and not excuse or turn a blind eye to these egregious and brazen actions against civilians by terrorists.

Israel will continue to ensure access to the Temple Mount for peaceful worshippers and visitors while maintaining security and public order. As a responsible State, Israel does not wish for escalation and tension. However, Israel remains ready to respond to any threat of violence that undermines the safety and security of worshippers of all religions.

I call upon the international community to support Israel's actions to maintain calm and stability at the holy sites and in Jerusalem by refraining from inflammatory rhetoric and by encouraging dialogue. I further call upon the Security Council to uphold its important responsibility and condemn any act of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as put a stop to the ongoing culture of incitement and hate speech by the Palestinian Authority. As demonstrated, incitement and violence are inseparable. Moreover, the international community must be careful not to adopt or promote the Palestinian narrative of lies, blaming Israel for the current situation when Palestinian extremists are wholly to blame. Any drawing of a moral equivalency between violent Palestinian terrorist groups and Israel – a law-abiding nation – is repugnant and an affront. Israel has done its utmost to maintain law and order and peaceful access to all of the holy sites and will continue to do so, even in the face of Palestinian violence and provocations.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gilad **Erdan**
Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations
