

**STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

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THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

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

New York, 18 January 2023

Mr. President,

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

The Committee would also like to congratulate Brazil, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland upon assuming their membership in the Council.

Allow me also to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his efforts and commitment to bringing about a just and lasting solution on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions that would achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and finally see Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. President,

The Committee expresses its deep concern and dismay at the recent provocations at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, the first such incursion by an Israeli minister since 2017. On 3 January, Israel's Minister of National Security, accompanied by a heavy security presence and without coordination with the Jordanian Waqf, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem. Such violations of the historic and legal status quo and repeated provocative actions at

this sensitive Holy Site have sparked outrage among Palestinians, the Muslim community and the international community.

We commend Japan for convening the Security Council emergency meeting on 5 January to discuss this worrying situation. The long history of this conflict reveals that the cost of such violations of the historic status quo, breaches of international law, and unilateral measures and provocations is very high and is the primary cause of the rising levels of violence and instability. Such illegal actions have repeatedly undermined the efforts to find a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and are undermining the viability of the two-State solution.

. The Committee stands firmly for preserving the historic status quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. Any unilateral actions that undercut the historical status quo are unacceptable, as are any violations of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying Power from altering the character, status and demography of the occupied territory.

The Committee also remains concerned over the high levels of violence we continue to witness throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with clashes, protests, attacks, settler-related violence and Israeli security operations, which continue to cause civilian casualties, including among children. The Special

Coordinator reported that in 2022, over one hundred and fifty Palestinian children and more than twenty Israelis had been killed in the West Bank and Israel, the highest number of fatalities in years. The violence, provocations, incitement, and spreading of inflammatory rhetoric must stop, and all perpetrators must be held accountable.

Despite the Security Council's repeated affirmations that settlements constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law and the repeated calls for a cessation, Israel's settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues unabated. These illegal actions, which systematically erode the possibility of establishing a contiguous, independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, must be immediately ceased, and there must be accountability.

Mr President,

This February 2023, the Committee will finalize its independent legal study on "The legality of the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", commissioned in 2021. The study addresses whether Israel's de facto and de jure annexation measures, continued settlement and protracted occupation of the Palestinian territory – the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip – render the occupation illegal under international law and the implications of this action. The study is timely following the General Assembly's adoption of resolution A/77/247 and the request to the

International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory opinion on this matter. The Committee supports the GA decision and urges the Secretary-General to take the necessary follow-up action.

The Committee is also deeply concerned about Israel's punitive actions against the Palestinian people, leadership and civil society in retaliation for the GA vote requesting the ICJ advisory opinion. We reject punitive measures in response to a peaceful, multilateral request for an advisory opinion or in retaliation for any GA resolution and call for the immediate reversal of these deplorable actions.

Equally troubling are the continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian homes and structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Committee calls on Israel, as the Occupying Power, to stop such practises, , in line with its obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law. In this regard, we also consider the proposed dangerous judicial reforms by the Israeli Government as further undermining the possibility of legal recourse for Palestinians on violations of their rights, including the right to land and property.

The Committee also remains increasingly concerned by the political and security dynamics and rising tensions. In the Gaza Strip, the situation remains fragile, and the risk of escalation persists despite the commendable efforts by the United Nations and regional and international partners, including Egypt and the State of Qatar, to

alleviate the deprivation and suffering caused by the Israeli blockade, now nearing its 16<sup>th</sup> year. We must again recognize that UNRWA remains indispensable and a key stabilizing element in the lives of thousands of Palestinians, and again call for its sufficient and predictable funding.

Mr President

The deepening occupation, increased violence, and the absence of a political horizon have empowered extremists and are eroding hope among Palestinians and Israelis alike that a just resolution of the conflict is achievable. This situation is unsustainable and needs immediate corrective action. Our responsibilities obligate us under the Charter and relevant resolutions, including by this august Council, to respond.

The Committee welcomes the Special Coordinator's call for the Israeli and Palestinians, along with regional States and the broader international community, to take concrete steps to change the negative trajectory on the ground, as called for by Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

The Committee stands ready to help garner the support needed to advance the peace process toward ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. It appreciates Member States' messages of solidarity at the annual commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November and their unwavering support for the four GA resolutions on the Question of Palestine. The Committee

commits to implementing the renewed GA mandate and will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba with a high-level event on 15 May 2023. We call on the Security Council and all Member States to join the commemoration and our efforts to promote the realization of a just solution to this historic injustice.

Thank you.

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