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

Security Council
Seventy-eighth year

Identical letters dated 31 January 2023 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

Israel, the occupying Power, is escalating its lethal attacks and punitive measures on the Palestinian civilian population under its illegal colonial occupation. Such brutality is causing widespread human suffering and is fanning the flames of a dangerous cycle of violence that is endangering millions of civilian lives and endangering regional and international peace and security. We are thus compelled to reiterate our calls for immediate international intervention to address this crisis, including our repeated calls for international protection for the Palestinian people.

While 2022 was the deadliest for Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since the United Nations began recording fatalities in 2005, the rate of killings in just the first month of 2023 is cause for alarm. As found by international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups, the number of Palestinian victims of Israeli soldier and settler violence has rapidly risen, increasing by 82 per cent in 2022, compared with 2021, and nearly fivefold (491 per cent) compared with 2020.

Since the start of 2023, Israeli occupying forces have killed 35 Palestinians, among them, 8 children and a woman, and injured hundreds of others. Twenty of the victims came from the Jenin refugee camp, including Omar Tarik Saadi, age 24, who died on 29 January of wounds sustained in the invasion of the camp on 26 January.

Also, on the evening of 27 January, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy, Wadee' Abu Rumouz, who was shot in the chest on 25 January in the occupied East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, died of his wounds, while shackled to his hospital bed, his family prevented from seeing him. Yesterday, another Palestinian youth was killed by this savagery. Nassim Abu Fouda, age 26, was killed by Israeli occupying forces near a military checkpoint near the Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil (Hebron), when soldiers fired at the vehicle in which he was riding and shot him in the head. In fact, the majority of recent victims have died after being shot in the head or chest as Israeli soldiers carry out a blatant shoot-to-kill policy.



Reflecting a recent Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor report, entitled “Pulling the trigger is the first resort”, the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor stated: “The Israeli army’s killings and summary executions of Palestinian civilians, as evidenced by its lax open-fire regulations and official protection system for perpetrators of horrific violations, demonstrate that these are State-sanctioned rather than individual actions.” Israeli settler violence is also part of this pattern of State-sponsored violence and impunity. For example, in less than 24 hours on 28 and 29 January, in addition to countless raids and assaults by Israeli soldiers, there were 144 attacks by Israeli settlers in Nablus alone, as well as other incidents of arson attacks on homes and vehicles, destruction of property and vandalization with hateful, racist graffiti and harassment and assaults on Palestinian civilians, including in occupied East Jerusalem, where marauding settlers chanted “Death to Arabs”.

In its praise for lethal attacks by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians and its recent decision to further arm and militarize Israeli settlers, the Israeli government is proving again that this is in fact policy, carried out willfully, wantonly and brazenly in grave breach of international law.

Just one example is the shooting and killing of a 17-year-old boy, Salah Mohammed Ali, in the Shufat refugee camp in occupied East Jerusalem last week. Salah was killed by Israeli occupying forces who claimed he was “holding a weapon”, which was actually a toy. Following the murder of Salah, Israel’s so-called National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, awarded “certificates of excellence” to the soldiers who killed him. Ben-Gvir, who has repeatedly incited against Palestinians and racistly characterized them as “terrorists” boasted at the ceremony: “I am proud of you and admire you ... I have no doubt that when a terrorist threatens you with a pistol, even if it later turns out to be a toy ... we will back you completely”.

In this regard, United Nations experts recently issued a statement, on 27 January, recalling Israel’s obligation as the occupying Power to ensure the protection, security and welfare of the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation, but stressed: “What we see is the contrary. Dehumanization, demonization and collective punishment of the Palestinians, the latter of which is specifically prohibited under international humanitarian law and constitutes a war crime.”

While Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government is ratcheting up its dehumanization, incitement and violence against Palestinians, it is also escalating its collective punishment, further proving the illegality of its occupation and its use of apartheid policies to control and oppress the Palestinian population. As also stressed by the United Nations experts: “None of this violence would occur if Israel were to end its illegal, half-century old occupation immediately and unconditionally, as required by international law.”

In this regard, following an earlier announcement of punitive measures against the Palestinian people and their leadership for seeking justice through the General Assembly’s request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Israel has now declared that it will pursue other illegal measures amounting to collective punishment in response to an attack on 27 January in a settlement in occupied East Jerusalem in which seven Israelis were killed. The Israeli government has threatened to seal and demolish the homes of alleged attackers, revoke residency rights and deport Palestinian civilians, among other punitive measures, along with declaring plans to intensify settlement activities and expand settlers’ access to weaponry. Such illegal measures have already begun as, on 29 January, Israeli occupying forces sealed the family home of Khairy Alqam in occupied East Jerusalem in retaliation for the 27 January attack. Despite the fact that he was killed in the attack, his family is being punished and forcibly displaced from their home in a blatant reprisal in breach of international law.

Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention specifically prohibits such reprisals and collective punishment, stipulating: “No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.” Moreover, Article 49 (1) of the Convention clearly stipulates: “Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.”

Yet, Israel is systematically and flagrantly violating all of these prohibitions in its conduct in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of the Convention and of numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [607 \(1988\)](#), [636 \(1989\)](#), [641 \(1989\)](#), [681 \(1990\)](#), [726 \(1992\)](#) and [799 \(1992\)](#), and Israeli officials openly boast about the commission of these crimes.

We thus reiterate our calls to the international community to act swiftly and concretely to uphold international law to provide protection to the Palestinian people and bring a halt to Israel’s grave breaches, including, inter alia, all acts of deportation, forcible transfer and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people, all collective punishment policies, including the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners, including children, and the demolition of homes and properties, and all acts of illegal colonization in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including construction of settlements and the wall and any attempts to alter the demography, character, status and identity of the Territory, including attempts to assert sovereignty over Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

The Security Council and the General Assembly, using the tools available to the international community, must act forthwith to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes. The International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice must likewise proceed in accordance with their mandates to uphold international law and ensure justice. States must also act individually to uphold their legal obligations, including as High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the obligation to ensure respect of the Conventions in all circumstances.

We reiterate that Israel has no sovereignty rights whatsoever in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and must be held accountable as the occupying Power. It is long past time that the Israeli government officials, military personnel and settlers bear the consequences for their deliberate human rights violations and contempt of international law. It is long past time to address the root causes of the recurrent crises we are facing: Israel’s illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 776 letters regarding the ongoing historic injustice against the Palestinian people and the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, 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 26 January 2023 ([A/ES-10/924-S/2023/62](#)), 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 must be held accountable, and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

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