



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and
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relevant to the question of Palestine

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
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I. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CALLS ON PARTIES TO UPHOLD THE STATUS QUO OF HOLY SITES IN JERUSALEM

On 5 April, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland issued the following [statement](#).

I am appalled by the images of violence inside the Al-Qibli Mosque. I am disturbed by the apparent beating of Palestinians by Israeli security forces and large number of arrests. I also strongly reject the stockpiling and use of fireworks and rocks by Palestinians inside the mosque.

This holy period and places of worship should be for safe and peaceful religious reflection, noting that nearly 600,000 people have visited the Holy Sites in Jerusalem since the beginning of Ramadan. I call on political, religious and community leaders on all sides to reject incitement, inflammatory rhetoric, and provocative actions.

The historic status quo of the Holy Sites must be upheld, in line with the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The role of the Waqf is vital and it must be empowered to fulfil its crucial duties.

Leaders on all sides must act responsibly and refrain from steps that could escalate tensions.

The indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza is unacceptable and must stop.

The UN remains in close contact with all concerned parties to de-escalate the situation.

II. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL IS APPALLED BY VIOLENCE IN THE AL-QIBLI MOSQUE IN JERUSALEM

On 5 April, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for Secretary-General António Guterres, made the following [comments](#) during the noon briefing.

Turning to the Middle East, I can tell you that the Secretary-General is shocked and appalled by the images he saw this morning of the violence and beating by Israeli security forces inside the al-Qibli mosque in Jerusalem. At a time of the calendar which is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims, this should be a time for peace and not violence. Places of worship should only be used for peaceful religious observances.

And you may have seen that we also have a [statement](#) by Tor Wennesland, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, which was issued earlier this morning. He said he too is appalled by the images of violence inside the Al-Qibli Mosque and disturbed by the apparent beating of Palestinians by Israeli security forces and the large number of arrests.

Mr. Wennesland also strongly rejects the stockpiling and use of fireworks and rocks by Palestinians inside the mosque.

He called on political, religious and community leaders on all sides to reject incitement, inflammatory rhetoric, and provocative actions and added that the UN remains in close contact with all concerned parties to de-escalate the situation.

And on a related note, we and our humanitarian partners stand ready to help ensure the restoration of medical services as soon as possible at the Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount compound. The health clinic at the compound was severely damaged which forced its closure after Israeli forces used it to enter the Al-Qibli Mosque in East Jerusalem. That's based on an initial assessment carried out by our humanitarian colleagues, who spoke with multiple sources at the site, including health care providers and worshippers.

III. BUREAU OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONDEMNS VIOLENCE AGAINST PALESTINIAN WORSHIPERS AT JERUSALEM'S HOLY SITES

On 5 April, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following [statement](#).

The Bureau of the United Nations General Assembly's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns the raid by Israeli Forces inside the Aqsa Mosque Compound/Al-Haram al-Sharif on 4 April, which resulted in hundreds of Palestinian worshippers beaten, injured and detained while also causing damage to the building of Al-Qibli Mosque. This violence is particularly egregious during a time of heightened religious sensitivity with the observance of Ramadan, Passover and Easter.

Israel's illegal policies and practices have continued to entrench its illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory it has occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, with the Gaza Strip additionally severely isolated under a nearly 16-year blockade. Since the start of 2023, Israel has increased its military operations inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resulting in the killing of at least 95 Palestinians, including 17 children. The Bureau calls for accountability for all of these violations.

The Bureau reiterates its calls for respect of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel must comply with its international legal obligations, including in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The Bureau also reiterates its calls for respect of the historical status quo of the Holy Sites, respect for the sanctity of all places of worship, and for a halt of provocations by Israeli forces and incitement by extremist Israeli settlers in and around them. Furthermore, the Bureau calls for respect the freedom of all worshippers to access the religious sites in accordance with established parameters.

Finally, the Bureau calls on leaders to exert influence and ensure de-escalation and calm during religious festivities. The Bureau believes that a just and lasting peace will only be achieved with the end of Israel's occupation, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees and the achievement of the two-State solution according to international law and past agreements resulting in the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

IV. LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES CONDEMNS ISRAELI ATTACKS AGAINST WORSHIPPERS AT THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE

On 5 April, the Council of the League of Arab States at an extraordinary session adopted the following [communiqué](#).

The Council of the League of Arab States met in extraordinary session at the level of permanent representatives on 5 April 2023. The session was chaired by the Arab Republic of Egypt and held at the request of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in coordination with the State of Palestine and the Arab Republic of Egypt (chair of the Ministerial Council) to discuss Arab and international action to address the brutal Israeli crimes and attacks on the lives and holy places of the Palestinian people in the occupied city of Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine.

The Council affirmed that it:

1. Strongly condemns the crimes being committed by the Israeli occupation forces against unarmed Muslim worshippers at the Aqsa Mosque, which have escalated dangerously during the past few days of the holy month of Ramadan and led to hundreds of injuries and arrests of persons practicing ritual seclusion at the mosque, and incursions and deliberate desecration of the Aqsa Mosque by Israeli officials and extremist settlers under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces;
2. Rejects and condemns all Israeli violations of Islamic and Christian holy sites and, in particular, attempts to alter the historical and legal status quo at the Aqsa Mosque, divide it spatially and temporally, turn away Muslim worshippers, or undermine their freedom to pray there; to take control of Jordanian Islamic Waqf Administration in occupied Jerusalem, attack staff members and prevent them from doing their jobs; and to impose Israeli law on the Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif; and reaffirms the right of Muslims and Christians to safe and unrestricted access to their places of worship to perform their religious obligations freely in the Aqsa Mosque and churches in occupied Jerusalem;
3. Holds accountable Israel, the occupying Power, for the consequences of these crimes and measures, which undermine freedom of worship at Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city of Jerusalem, above all at the Aqsa Mosque, and which constitute flagrant violations of United Nations resolutions, international law and international humanitarian law; and warns that these attacks and crimes are a blatant provocation against the sensibilities of believers everywhere that risks igniting a spiral of violence that could threaten security and stability in the region and the world;
4. Reaffirms the importance of the historical Hashemite Jordanian custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city of Jerusalem, which plays a major role in protecting those sites and maintaining their historical and legal status; and reiterates that the Jerusalem Waqf and Aqsa Mosque Affairs Administration of Jordan is the sole authority entrusted with administering the affairs of the Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif;

5. Salutes, hails and pays tribute to the Palestinian people of Jerusalem, who stand steadfast in the occupied city of Jerusalem as they defend, unarmed, the Aqsa Mosque and Islamic and Christian holy sites against the brutal and systematic crimes and acts of aggression committed by the occupying Israeli forces in the Holy City;

6. Calls on the United Nations, including the Security Council, to shoulder its legal, moral and humanitarian responsibilities to bring an immediate halt to this Israeli aggression, provide international protection to the Palestinian people, and protect their right to freedom of worship;

7. Demands implementation of resolutions on the Palestinian question issued by the Executive Council of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which stress that the Aqsa Mosque/Haram Al-Sharif, over its entire 144-dunum area, is a dedicated place of worship for Muslims only and an integral part of the world's cultural heritage sites;

8. Stresses that member States are determined to take the necessary steps and measures at all levels, including by engaging in intensive diplomatic action, such as writing letters, reaching out to contacts and holding bilateral meetings, in order to protect the city of Jerusalem, defend its Islamic and Christian holy sites, and support the political, social, economic and humanitarian rights of its people;

9. Calls for coordination between the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to protect the occupied city of Jerusalem from the policies and systematic attacks of Israel;

10. Calls on the councils of Arab ambassadors and the missions of the League to launch an intensive diplomatic effort to convey the substance of the present communiqué to the capitals of influential countries around the world;

11. Calls on the Arab groups at the United Nations, the Human Rights Council and UNESCO to initiate consultations and the necessary measures to confront and put a stop to systematic Israeli attacks in the occupied city of Jerusalem;

12. Calls for the Council to remain in permanent session to follow up developments on the aggressive plans of Israel.

V. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CONDEMNS ATTACKS ON PALESTINIANS AT AL-AQSA MOSQUE

On 6 April, Francesca Albanese, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#).

“As Palestinian Muslims gathered for Ramadan prayers exercising their right to worship in Al-Aqsa Mosque, Israeli authorities used blatantly excessive and unjustified force against

them,” said Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Albanese said at least 31 Palestinians were reportedly injured inside and immediately outside the compound, while paramedics were allegedly prevented from providing medical treatment to the wounded. According to initial accounts, Israeli forces violently entered Al-Aqsa Mosque, used stun grenades and tear gas, fired sponge-tipped bullets, and indiscriminately beat Muslim worshippers – including elderly people and women – with batons and rifle butts. At least 450 Palestinian men were reportedly arrested, and some were kicked and slapped by escorting soldiers as they were led out of the Haram Al-Sharif compound in handcuffs.

The expert deplored the “reckless and unlawful” actions of Israeli forces, which reportedly allowed some 165 Jewish Israelis to enter the compound, in violation of the Status Quo Agreement, which Israel is bound to respect. “The well-known desire of Israeli settlers to either destroy the mosque or forcibly convert all or part of the compound into a synagogue, as happened to the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, is a source of deep anxiety among Palestinians,” she said.

The Special Rapporteur noted that similar violence took place during the holy month of Ramadan in 2021 and 2022, adding to the daily violence under Israeli occupation.

“These actions have led to a spiralling situation of rocket fire into Israel and missiles launched into Gaza, endangering civilians on both sides of the Green Line. I am alarmed by the escalation of violence, particularly because of the further devastation it will bring to Palestinians in Gaza, who have been trapped by an inescapable siege since 2007,” Albanese said.

“Over the years, Israel has not ceased its violent attacks against Palestinian worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque in violation of international law,” the expert said, calling on the international community to step up efforts to hold the occupying power accountable for its unacceptable behaviour in the occupied territory before the situation spirals further out of control.

“It is imperative that all parties comply with international law, without exception,” she said. “Failure to do so fuels and perpetuates the culture of injustice and impunity.”

VI. WORLD BANK GRANTS \$10 MILLION TO THE PA FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR

On 7 April, the World Bank issued the following [press release](#).

The World Bank announced today a \$10 million grant to support the Palestinian Authority (PA) in improving the quality, efficiency, and resilience of public health services.

Despite efforts to improve access to and quality of health care in the Palestinian territories, much remains to be done to improve the utilization of primary health care in West Bank. Access to reliable chronic disease care, particularly for cancers, is one of the

most substantial drivers of the disease burden in Gaza. The Health System Efficiency and Resilience Project will help address these challenges.

“While government spending on health constitutes four percent of GDP, higher than many regional peers, the Palestinian healthcare system struggles to provide the care needed for all its citizens. The new World Bank-financed project intends to help ensure continuity of healthcare services, expand its coverage and build its resilience,” said Stefan Emblad, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza.

The continuing restrictions on movement and access, fiscal pressures, and escalations in violence continue to weaken the health system and its ability to deliver quality healthcare services. The Ministry of Health also depends on a system of outside medical referrals for providing tertiary-level services for patients for specialized health services. These referrals are driven by the unavailability of services in public facilities and constitute a substantial fiscal burden for the Palestinian Authority, crowding out spending on other essential health services and priority expenditures in other sectors.

The project will prioritize primary health care along with strengthening hospitals to maximize access and efficiency, contributing to a reduced financial burden for referrals while ensuring more timely access to treatment for the population. It will aim to address the prevention and treatment of priority non-communicable diseases, particularly hypertension, diabetes, and cancers at the primary care level, in areas with lower access. In parallel, the project will focus on strengthening the public hospital system with the procurement of targeted medical equipment for cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and maternal and newborn health. Crucially, the project will also contribute toward the establishment of radiotherapy services in Gaza, which is a major bottleneck for the treatment of cancer patients in Gaza.

The project represents the continuation of the World Bank’s long-term operational and technical support to strengthen the Palestinian health system. “Health sector funding needs remain substantial. The World Bank will work in close coordination with development partners to ensure complementarity and avoid overlap, improving the sustainability of health sector financing by reducing outside medical referrals expenditures,” added Emblad.

VII. EU EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND LEBANON

On 8 April, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell issued the following [statement](#).

The EU is deeply concerned by the grave escalation of violence in recent days in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon.

Last night again, deadly terrorist attacks have occurred in Tel Aviv, one of them killing an Italian tourist. The EU expresses its total condemnation of these acts of violence. This must cease.

This upsurge in violence follows days of tension and clashes at the Holy Sites, including the intervention and the use of force by Israeli police inside the compound of the Al Aqsa mosque.

The EU condemns the violent incidents which have happened in the Holy Sites and reminds that the status quo of all the Holy Sites must be preserved.

We also condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and the territory of Lebanon. We condemn unreservedly the terrorist attack which killed two Israelis and left one seriously injured.

Israel has the right to defend itself. At the same time, any response must be proportionate.

The EU calls for an immediate end to the ongoing violence. Everything must be done to prevent the conflict from spreading.

We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint, to avoid further escalation and promote calm for the ongoing religious holidays.

VIII. OIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HOLDS EXTRAORDINARY MEETING ON ISRAELI ATTACKS ON THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE

Following the meeting on 8 April, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Executive Committee issued the following [communiqué](#).

The Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in its extraordinary, open-ended meeting held on April 08, 2023 (Ramadan 17, 1444 AH), to consider the continuous Israeli attacks on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque at the request of the State of Palestine and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and in coordination and consultation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the current Chair of the Summit and Executive Committee, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia,

Proceeding from the principles and objectives of the OIC Charter, Affirming all OIC resolutions on the Question of Palestine and Al-Quds Ash-Sharif, Reaffirming the centrality of the Palestinian Cause, with Al-Quds Ash-Sharif and its sanctities at its heart, for the entire Islamic Ummah, and the eternal attachment of Muslims all over the world to the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two Qiblas and the third of the Holy Mosques, as well as affirming the Arab and Islamic identity of occupied East Al-Quds, the capital of the State of Palestine and dismissing any prejudice to that in any way:

1. Condemns in the strongest terms the dangerous escalation by the Israeli occupation forces and terrorist settlers by repeatedly storming the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif during the blessed month of Ramadan, culminating in the atrocious brutal attack on the night of Ramadan 14 on worshipers and those stationed in its courtyards while performing their prayers and rituals, including women and children, wounding and

arresting hundreds of them, and damaging the Qibli Mosque in a flagrant provocation to the feelings of Muslims all over the world, an attack on the existing legal and historical situation, and a severe violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions,

2. Warns of the consequences of the continued infringement by the Israeli occupation authorities, their officials, and terrorist settlers on the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif, including continuous provocations, abuses, daily severe assaults, and incursions in gross violation of international law and unprecedented tampering with the existing historical and legal situation to perpetuate the temporal and spatial division of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and stresses that the Israeli occupation has no sovereignty over any part of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif and that Muslim worshipers have the absolute right to pray freely and safely in and around it, at any time, without any hindrance or violence inflicted on them,

3. Holds Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for the consequences of these dangerous and provocative actions of its racist government, as it continues to seek, through systematic brutal attacks, deliberate provocation, and repeated incitement, to inflame the situation and provoke a religious confrontation with unforeseen consequences, warns of the possible repercussions on international peace and security, and calls on the international community, and in particular the UN Security Council, in its capacity as responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, to assume its responsibilities and take urgent action and necessary measures to deter and stop the dangerous Israeli escalation and all other illegal and provocative measures and policies that affect the occupied city of Al-Quds and the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif, without selectivity or double standards,

4. Appreciates the positions of the countries that expressed their rejection and condemnation of the provocative and aggressive Israeli incursions into the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, calls on them to take practical steps, including imposing sanctions on the Israeli colonial regime, to stop these practices and all its illegal measures and policies, and stresses in this context the responsibility of the state parties in the Geneva Conventions, that Israel, the illegal colonial occupying Power, must be held accountable for all its violations of international humanitarian law, whether by its government officials, military forces, or extremist settlers,

5. Pays tribute to the steadfast Palestinian citizens in the city of Al-Quds, and affirms its standing with them and supporting their heroic steadfastness in all possible ways. It also affirms the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over Al-Quds Ash-Sharif and all its holy places and the old town of Al-Quds and its walls and that all measures taken or intended to be taken by the Israeli colonial occupation authorities, which seek to change the character and legal status of the city or its demographic composition, are null and void and have no legal effect,

6. Affirms the historical Jordanian Hashemite Custodianship over the Islamic and Christian holy places in the city of Al-Quds and its role in protecting these sanctities and preserving the existing legal and historical status therein and emphasizes that the

Department of Al-Quds Endowments and Affairs of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif affiliated to the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs, and Holy Places is the authority authorized to manage the affairs of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif,

7. Reaffirms the important role of Al-Quds Committee under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohamed VI, of Morocco, in challenging the detrimental policies implemented by the Israeli occupation authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif to change the character and legal status of the city as well as its demographic, cultural and historical composition; and values the role of Bayt Mal Al-Quds Agency.

8. Calls on the OIC Member States and General Secretariat to take urgent action to address these severe attacks and activate the mechanisms stipulated in its relevant resolutions to move at all levels and send urgent messages to the concerned international bodies, including the UN Security Council, reflecting the OIC positions in this regard and stressing the request to provide international protection for the Palestinian people and the occupied city of Al-Quds Ash-Sharif and its sanctities, specifically the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif, in the face of illegal attempts to change their current legal and historical situation,

9. Reaffirms the importance of continuing coordination and cooperation among the OIC, the League of Arab States (LAS), and the African Union (AU) to protect the occupied city of Al-Quds against systematic Israeli policies and attacks.

10. Calls on the ambassadors of the OIC Member States to act and convey the contents of this communique to the capitals of influential countries around the world.

11. Calls on the Islamic Group at the relevant international organizations to act and initiate the necessary consultations and measures to confront and stop the systematic Israeli aggressions in the occupied city of Al-Quds.

12. Affirms its continued follow-up of all developments related to the Holy City of Al-Quds, specifically the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Ash-Sharif, and to take the appropriate steps in this regard, as stipulated in the resolutions of the Islamic summits and the Councils of Foreign Ministers.

IX. UNRWA CALLS ON WEST BANK STAFF TO END FIVE WEEK STRIKE

On 12 April, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the following [statement](#).

UNRWA staff who have expressed their commitment to carry out their work must be able to do so freely in the West Bank. They are however being prevented from working through threats, intimidation and force by local staff union members, including through forced shutting down of premises, threatening phone calls and public statements. As UNRWA initiated plans to open several health centres across the West Bank, threats from the staff union that any involved staff would “bear the consequences of this dangerous act

[resumption of work]” circulated on social media networks. Some Agency staff are now requesting to be protected while working.

It is appalling that West Bank Area Staff Union (ASU) representatives have opted for the tactic of spreading threats and fear. By doing so, they are actively preventing pregnant women and elderly Palestine refugees from seeing their doctors in UNRWA health centres. It is irresponsible to close schools and impede learning because of a work dispute, to over 45,000 children, many of whom already suffer from learning loss incurred during COVID-19.

It is even more shocking and unprecedented that staff working for a UN Agency delivering humanitarian services are the ones actively denying basic rights to a community that has been deprived of fundamental rights for decades.

Since the West Bank local staff union declared a strike on 4 March, critical services to nearly 900,000 Palestine Refugees across the West Bank have been suspended, with children excluded from schools, patients prevented from accessing basic health services and medicines in the Agency’s health centres. Hundreds of tons of solid waste have piled up in refugee camps, causing serious risks to the public and environmental health of the communities in the camps and surrounding areas.

Years of chronic underfunding have depleted the Agency’s resources and led to the deterioration of the quality of its services. With classes of 50 children and medical visits lasting less than three minutes, the UNRWA senior management has long warned the international community of the impact of underfunding on the wellbeing of Palestine refugees and staff.

The Agency started this year with debts amounting to US\$ 75 million and anticipates a substantive funding shortfall against its budgetary requirements. The West Bank union is demanding a pay increase while UNRWA staff salaries are already on average 12 per cent above those of the Agency’s comparator, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and above the PA’s inflation-related salary increases. The salaries of UNRWA staff – such as the educators, teachers, health and sanitation workers, protection teams and other service providers – use 85 per cent of the UNRWA annual budget.

An increase in salaries and benefits – beyond the comparator- of US\$ 55 million in 2019 for staff has left the Agency in continued deficit ever since. The only way to increase pay in the West Bank today is to cut services and cut jobs, both of which would severely impact the services and the refugees, something that the UNRWA management is determined to avoid.

In summary, the ASU is demanding a pay increase even though the salaries are already above the pay policy and even though the Agency has no money to pay.

The senior management of UNRWA has extensively engaged in dialogue with staff union representatives with the aim of improving staff conditions of work as much as the resources allow. However, increases should not come at the cost of the services provided to the communities or job cuts.

UNRWA and its staff across all the fields of operations are determined to continue to deliver services, despite these threats and efforts to undermine the future of the Agency including its ability to deliver on its mandate. UNRWA calls on the ASU to end the strike and to stop intimidating those colleagues who are working to deliver services to the communities in line with the United Nations values. More than ever, we must strike the balance between the right to strike, the right to work and the right of Palestine refugees to access basic services.

X. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS URGE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO HELP STOP FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN EAST JERUSALEM

On 13 April, Francesca Albanese, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, and Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, issued the following [press release](#).

The international community must take immediate action to stop Israel's forced evictions and displacement of Palestinians in East Jerusalem as part of Israel's annexation and de-Palestinianisation of the city, UN experts said today.

"The world's attention has been focused on Israel's recklessness in Al-Aqsa, rockets fired from Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, with deadly attacks against Israeli and international civilians making headlines. All the while, tenfold Palestinian deaths were not making similar headlines," the experts said.

"There has been an ongoing and unchecked tragedy: the forced eviction of Palestinians from their homes," they said.

"Despite efforts of international organisations and activists, Palestinians under Israeli occupation continue to be forced out of their homes and dispossessed of their land and properties on the basis of discriminatory laws," the experts said. They said these laws were designed to consolidate Jewish ownership in Jerusalem, irredeemably altering its demographic composition and status.

"Israel's transfer of its own population into the occupied territory confirms a deliberate intention to colonise the territory it occupies – a practice strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law," they said, reiterating their [past statement](#). "It amounts to a *prima facie* war crime."

An estimated 150 Palestinian families in the Old City of Jerusalem adjacent neighbourhoods such as Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah are at risk of forced eviction and displacement by Israeli authorities and settler organisations. Over the past decades, hundreds of Palestinian properties in occupied East Jerusalem have been taken over by settlers, in part due to a law that claims to allow the transfer of pre-1948 Jewish property to the 'original Jewish owners' or their 'heirs'. According to the experts the law helps settler organizations expropriate Palestinian properties through a manipulation of the law.

“This is lawfare in action. The law is discriminatory and acquisitive by design, and no such right to restitution exists for the over 1 million Palestinians and their descendants who were displaced and dispossessed from Jerusalem, Israel, and the rest of the West Bank and Gaza as of 1947 and in 1967. They are still longing for justice,” the UN experts said.

The experts expressed specific concern for three families in East Jerusalem: the Shehade family in Silwan, the Ghaith-Sub Laban family in the Old City, and the Salem family in Sheikh Jarrah. Despite living in their homes for many decades under a protected tenancy lease, these families have faced eviction lawsuits filed by settler organisations seeking to take over their properties for years. The Ghaith-Sub Laban family has already exhausted all legal avenues to challenge the eviction order, and the Israeli authorities have served them with a notice to vacate their house by 25 April, or face forced eviction.

“This is in blatant violation of international law that does not confer the occupying Power the authority to change the local legislation unless strictly required by security needs: settler-colonial intent and interests are not a security need,” the experts said.

“The establishment and expansion of settlements constitute a grave breach of international law, prosecutable under the Rome Statute. No State should passively acquiesce with these illegal acts to trump the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, adequate housing, property, non-discrimination” the experts stressed.

“For the Palestinians, the enjoyment of human rights is a far-off hope as the suppression of these rights is part of the very architecture of the Israeli occupation,” they said. “The almost 56-year long occupation and the way it is allowed to conduct itself with general impunity and without consequences, makes a farce of international law and the credibility of the system mandated to enforce it. The occupation must end with all deliberate speed and until that day, Israel must comply fully with international humanitarian law and international human rights law obligations.”

The experts have repeatedly raised these issues with the Government of Israel without any response to date.

XI. ICJ AUTHORIZES AFRICAN UNION TO PARTICIPATE IN ADVISORY PROCEEDINGS

On 13 April, the International Court of Justice issued the following [press release](#).

The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has authorized the African Union, at its request, to participate in the advisory proceedings on the *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*.

Pursuant to Article 66 of its Statute, the Court has decided that the Union is likely to be able to furnish information on the questions submitted to the Court by the General Assembly. The Union may therefore present a written statement on those questions, and written comments on any written statements made by States or other organizations, within the time-limits fixed by the Court in its [Order of 3 February 2023](#), namely by 25 July 2023 and 25 October 2023, respectively.

The subsequent procedure has been reserved for further decision.

XII. IMF REPORTS ON RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK IN THE OPT

On 14 April, the International Monetary Fund issued a [report](#) to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee. Its key issues and recommendations are reproduced below:

KEY ISSUES

The Palestinian economy faces myriad economic policy challenges and risks abound. The political and security situation continues to deteriorate. Public finances remain unsustainable, despite a contained 2022 fiscal deficit. The banking system has adequate capital and liquidity buffers, with stable non-performing loans, but there are signs of asset quality deterioration and weaker deposit growth, as Palestinians' real incomes continue to erode.

This IMF report puts fiscal and structural reforms into a broader context. It discusses key elements of the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations and their implications for Palestinian growth and income convergence with Israel. It then outlines necessary and sufficient conditions for the customs and *de facto* currency union to work as intended, including contributions from the Palestinian Authority (PA), Israel and the international community. The report also discusses labour market issues, outcomes, and policies for faster economic growth and job creation.

Key Recommendations

- Work with the Government of Israel (GoI) to facilitate the movement and access of goods and people and investment in Area C.
- Address the fiscal crisis by formulating detailed fiscal reform policies to reduce the public sector wage bill, net lending, and health spending and, with the GoI, resolving the outstanding fiscal files.
- Continue to improve the AML/CFT framework, further strengthen financial reporting standards and supervision, and, working with the Bank of Israel (BoI), operationalize an alternative mechanism for shekel correspondent banking relations.

XIII. UN SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS OPEN DEBATE ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

On 25 April, the Security Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland delivered a briefing ([S/PV.9309](#)). Ambassador Cheikh Niang, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, also made a [statement](#). Both statements are reproduced below. The press release issued after the meeting can be found here ([SC/15264](#)).

Special Coordinator Statement

Days ago, Muslims around the world celebrated Eid Al-Fitr, bringing to a close the holy month of Ramadan, which overlapped with Christian Easter and Jewish Passover. That holy period, while

mostly calm, regrettably also witnessed shocking incidents of violence at holy sites and tensions across the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel, with a brief escalation spilling over into the region. While a wider scale escalation was averted, with each de-escalation the stakes get higher and the tools at our disposal become fewer. The current trajectory is neither sustainable nor inevitable. The parties, the region and the international community need to address the underlying political, security, economic and institutional challenges driving the conflict. There must be an end to the unilateral measures, provocations and incitement that enable violence and prevent progress towards resolving the conflict and ending the occupation.

Overall, in the occupied West Bank, 17 Palestinians, including two children, were killed and 200 Palestinians, including four women and 38 children, were injured by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, search-and-arrest operations, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis and other incidents. Another 39 Palestinians, including three women and four children, were injured by Israeli settlers or other civilians in shooting attacks, stone-throwing and other incidents.

Four Israeli civilians, including two women and one child, were killed and 31 injured, including two women, one child, and 12 Israeli security forces personnel, by Palestinians in shooting and ramming attacks, clashes, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, and other incidents. In addition, a foreign national was killed and seven foreigners were injured.

The holiday period was largely observed peacefully, with millions of Muslim visitors to the Al-Aqsa compound during Ramadan, the highest numbers in many years. However, on 4 and 5 April, confrontations erupted at the holy sites in Jerusalem when Israeli security forces entered the Al-Qibli prayer hall at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and forcibly removed Palestinians who were barricaded inside. Israeli security forces deployed stun grenades, beat Palestinians with batons and rifles and fired rubber-coated metal bullets, while some Palestinians inside the mosque lit and threw fireworks and stones at Israeli security forces.

Those developments came in the wake of provocative calls and incitement from several parties. Israeli extremists called for Jews to conduct ritual animal sacrifices at the holy sites. Hamas and other armed Palestinian factions called for Palestinians to go to the Al-Aqsa Mosque to resist such acts. As in previous years, Israeli police blocked attempts to carry out the animal sacrifices in the compound, arresting at least two Israelis.

Following those events at the holy sites, on 4 and 5 April militants in Gaza and Lebanon fired dozens of rockets towards Israel. While some were intercepted by Israel's aerial defence system, 46 landed in Israel, causing one injury and damage to property. The barrage from Lebanon was the most intensive since 2006. The Israel Defence Forces carried out airstrikes in Gaza and southern Lebanon on 7 April, aimed at what were said to be Hamas targets. A children's hospital and a health clinic in Gaza were damaged; however, no injuries were reported. Lebanon's Prime Minister condemned the launching of rockets towards Israel. United Nations de-escalation efforts, as well as coordination and liaison by the parties with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, helped restore calm.

From 12 April, Israeli authorities prohibited non-Muslim visits to the site for the last days of Ramadan, in line with usual practice. On 15 April, confrontations erupted between Israeli police and Orthodox Christian worshippers attempting to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in

Jerusalem's Old City for the Holy Fire ceremony, exceeding an attendance limit enforced by Israeli authorities, citing safety concerns. The Greek Patriarchate and other church leaders criticized the limits on visitors, suggesting it was unjustifiably low and violated the status quo.

Other violence in the occupied West Bank and in Israel continued during the reporting period.

Many Palestinian casualties were incurred in Israeli military operations in Area A of the occupied West Bank and subsequent clashes, some of them armed. On 16 March, undercover Israeli forces entered Jenin, resulting in clashes. Israeli forces shot and killed four Palestinians, including a 14-year-old bystander. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed two of the individuals killed as members of their armed wings.

In Jerusalem's Old City, on 1 April an Arab-Israeli man was shot dead by Israeli security forces near an entrance to the holy sites in disputed circumstances.

On 7 April, two British-Israeli sisters, the youngest a 15-year-old girl, were killed in a shooting attack in the West Bank by perpetrators in a car with Palestinian plates. Their mother was critically injured in the attack and died three days later. No arrests have been made.

On the same day, an Italian national was killed in Tel Aviv, and seven other Italian and British nationals were wounded, in what the Israeli police said was a ramming attack carried out by an Arab-Israeli man, who was shot dead at the scene by police. The alleged perpetrator's family disputed the ramming allegation.

On 10 April, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed by Israeli security forces during an arrest operation and ensuing clashes in Aqbat Jabr refugee camp, near Jericho. Eyewitnesses said that the boy was a bystander, while the Israeli army said that soldiers returned fire after being shot at.

Levels of settler-related violence also remained high. Huwwara remained a flashpoint. On 25 March, Palestinians carried out a shooting attack in the town, injuring two Israeli soldiers. Israeli settlers entered the town the same day and again on 27 March, throwing stones that injured two Palestinians and damaged property.

On 6 April, an Israeli settler shot and injured a Palestinian boy in Jerusalem's Old City. On 18 April, two Israelis were shot and wounded while in their vehicle in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. On the following day, Israeli security forces said they had arrested a 15-year-old Palestinian boy in Nablus who had confessed to carrying out the attack.

I am deeply concerned by the violence and inflammatory actions over the past weeks, particularly the violent confrontations inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque. I again urge respect for the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem, in line with the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

I condemn the indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres. I reiterate that acts of terror and targeting of civilians are abhorrent and must be condemned and rejected by all. All perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice.

Security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable to protect life.

I am appalled that children continue to be the victims of violence. Children must never be the targets of violence, used or put in harm's way.

On 19 March, senior Egyptian, Jordanian, Israeli, Palestinian and United States officials met in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, to further discuss understandings reached in Aqaba, Jordan on 23 February. In the spirit of the agreements reached in Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh, I urge all parties to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from any steps that could exacerbate the situation, and to take concrete steps to implement the joint communiqués. I remain closely engaged with all relevant parties to de-escalate tensions and chart a political way forward.

Turning to settlement-related developments, on 22 March Israeli authorities announced tenders for 940 housing units in settlements in Area C and 89 units in East Jerusalem. On 10 April, Israeli Government ministers and members of the Knesset joined over 15,000 settlers and other Israeli civilians in a heavily secured march to the illegal outpost of Evyatar, in the northern West Bank, calling on the Government to legalize it under Israeli law. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and that they are a substantial obstacle to peace. I call on all parties to avoid unilateral measures and provocations, such as this march, that can further inflame tensions.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property remain a serious concern. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced owners to demolish 11 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and eight in East Jerusalem, displacing 14 Palestinians, including seven children — a relative decline reflecting a reduction during Ramadan, as in prior years. The demolitions were carried out due to a lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. On 3 April, Israel's Supreme Court ruled against the eviction of a Palestinian family from their home in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, ending a 30-year legal battle. I call on Israeli authorities to end the displacement and eviction of Palestinians and to approve additional plans that would enable Palestinians to build legally and address their development needs.

Turning to the region, on the Golan, Israel Defence Forces reported, from 8 to 9 April, six rockets launched from Syria towards Israel and their retaliation with artillery fire and airstrikes, targeting locations in Syria, including Syrian army positions. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force was in contact with the Israel Defence Forces and Syrian authorities to de-escalate the situation, urging them to exercise maximum restraint and to respect the ceasefire, in accordance with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. No casualties were reported.

Amid the deteriorating situation on the ground, the Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to face significant fiscal and institutional challenges. At the same time, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that provide support to the Palestinian people, in coordination and complementarity with the PA, are facing significant funding shortfalls, notably the World Food Programme and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), impacting basic service delivery. I am particularly concerned by the prolonged closure of schools and UNRWA health clinics in the West Bank, where PA and UNRWA teachers, as well as UNRWA health staff, have been on strike for weeks, impacting children across the occupied Palestinian territory.

Efforts are needed by the parties and the international community to strengthen Palestinian institutions, improve governance and shore up the fiscal health of the Palestinian Authority. These steps must be part of a broader political effort that addresses the underlying drivers of the conflict, provides the space and access needed for the Palestinian economy to grow and encourages the parties to update their economic and administrative relations. The forthcoming Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels in early May provides an opportunity for a strategic shift in this direction. Addressing these immediate challenges can also provide much-needed momentum towards re-establishing a political horizon that favours the two State solution.

I urge Israelis, Palestinians, States of the region and the broader international community to show leadership, re-engage and work collectively in the pursuit of peace with the aim of ending the occupation and resolving the conflict in line with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements, in pursuit of the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestine — living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

CEIRPP Chair Statement

As mandated by the General Assembly, on 15 May the Committee will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, which will serve as a reminder of the historic injustice suffered by the Palestinian people, and the outstanding debt of the international community toward them and the over 5.8 million refugees who are registered with UNRWA. We are also reminded of the ongoing Israeli occupation, for nearly 56 years with no end in sight, as reflected in the worrying debates in Israel about the possibility of further annexation and colonization of Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Committee expresses its concern over Israel's passing on 21 March of an amendment to the 2005 Disengagement Law that paves the way for Israel to re-establish the former settlement of "Homesh" in the West Bank. The Committee reiterates its calls for a complete and immediate halt to all settlement activities and reminds Israel that all settlements are illegal regardless of their status under Israeli law, that these actions further violate Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and severely undermine efforts to find a just solution to the conflict.

This year, Ramadan coincided with Passover and Easter. This should be a time for peaceful reflection and celebration. Unfortunately, tensions rose when Israeli forces entered al-Aqsa Mosque's Al-Qibli prayer hall in East Jerusalem to demonstrate their power during those holy days. Stun grenades, batons, rifles, and rubber-coated metal bullets were used by Israeli security forces and armed civilians to dislodge Palestinian worshippers, leading to 44 Palestinian and 2 Israeli police officers injured in addition to material damage to this holy site.

About 440 Palestinians were arrested and later released and banned from al-Aqsa for the rest of Ramadan. On 5 April 2023, the Committee Bureau issued a statement denouncing the raid, which was seen around the world and drew global condemnation. Additionally, as is customary, Israel imposed restrictions on the attendance of Orthodox Easter on 16 April and used excessive force against Christian worshippers, citing security concerns.

The Committee condemns the violence inside the Al-Qibli prayer hall and reminds Israel that the historic status quo of the Holy Sites must be upheld, respecting the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Waqf.

The Committee strongly condemns the Israeli Finance Minister's outrageous statements denying the existence of the Palestinian people and calling to "wipe out" Huwwara, a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank, after extremist settlers went on a rampage killing one Palestinian and causing widespread destruction to Palestinian property, including dozens of homes in the wake of the killing of two Israelis. The Committee urges the Israeli authorities to respect international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and its obligations as the occupying Power, including in regard to protection of the civilian population.

We call on political, religious, and community leaders on all sides to reject inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions, and refrain from steps that could escalate tensions. The indiscriminate firing of rockets in civilian population is also unacceptable and must cease. We welcome the UN Special Coordinator's mediation efforts to de-escalate the situation and urge all parties to work towards reducing tensions.

While the international community will commemorate the Nakba of 1948, Israel continues to entrench its occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, with relentless establishment of illegal outposts, settlement advancement, seizures and the demolition of 331 structures, including donor-funded structures, and displacing 388 people, including 89 women and 197 children. In open defiance to the international community and appeals from its own friends, Israel advanced plans for over 7,200 settlement housing units, with approximately 4,000 settlements deep in the occupied West Bank.

Israel's actions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem point to what many have described as an ongoing Nakba of dispossession and displacement and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people. The international community, we, must not wait any further.

In this regard, the Committee welcomes the 52nd Human Rights Council resolutions of 4 April 2023 on the question of Palestine, [A/HRC/52/L.42](#) on Israeli settlements and [A/HRC/52/L.32](#) on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and calls for their implementation.

The Committee praised the high-level meetings in Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh by Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the State of Palestine, and the United States as well as their commitment to advancing security, stability, and peace as outlined in the Joint Communique. We hope for tangible and verifiable actions to address the crisis.

The Committee reiterates the need for Palestinian unity, based on the Algeria reconciliation agreement, to advance national aspirations and facilitate engagement in resolving the question of Palestine.

On behalf of the Committee, I want to make a strong appeal to the Security Council to demonstrate leadership by taking action to protect the Palestinian people with measures to ensure their human security in the face of constant aggressions and human rights violations by the occupying Power. In this context, the Committee also emphasizes its previous call to all Member

States to support UNRWA's sustainable funding, which is crucial for the well-being and livelihoods of Palestine refugees and overall regional stability.

The Committee believes that a just and lasting peace will only be achieved with the end of Israel's occupation, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees and the achievement of the two-State solution according to international law and past agreements resulting in the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.
