

International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem “Impact of Israeli settlement policies on the Palestinian population in Jerusalem”

20 July 2023

Statement by Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General, DPPA

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem – an event which has become an annual tradition - entitled “The impact of Israeli settlement policies on the Palestinian population in Jerusalem.” We thank the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation for this - timely initiative.

The topic of this year's Conference is particularly relevant, as we continue to witness the volatile security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the deadly escalations and confrontations that have taken place in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The scale of violence and scope of destruction we have witnessed in recent weeks, including widespread settler violence against Palestinians and their property in villages across the central and northern West Bank, as well as lethal attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians, are alarming.

Israel's ongoing expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the advancement of thousands of housing units, evictions and land confiscation, is of grave concern. In addition, recent amendments by the Israeli Government to the settlement planning process that are likely to expedite advancements are a worrying move in the wrong direction.

Settlements contravene international law, entrench the occupation and increase frustration and friction points that drive violence and conflict, while undermining the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. They are a major obstacle to the prospect of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on a viable two-State solution in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions. As reiterated by the Secretary-General, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Council Members on numerous occasions, Israel must cease all settlement activity immediately and fully respect its obligations under international law.

We note with concern, as mentioned earlier by the chairperson, the recent eviction of a Palestinian refugee family from their home in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, where they had been living since 1953. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) highlighted that some 970 Palestinians, including 424 children, in occupied East Jerusalem face eviction cases in Israeli courts.

Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and property in East Jerusalem and Area C also continues due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. This leaves Palestinian families in a limbo of dispossession and denial of rights.

We reiterate the call upon the Government of Israel to immediately end the demolition of Palestinian-owned

property and to prevent the possible displacement and forced eviction of Palestinians, in line with its international obligations, and to approve plans that would enable those communities to build legally and address their development needs.

Israel, as the occupying Power, has an obligation to protect Palestinians and their property from acts of violence by armed settlers and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

As the Secretary-General has noted, dangerous and hateful rhetoric, provocative actions and incitement by all sides have continued. Such conduct, which has the potential not only to increase tensions but also to spark more violence, must be unequivocally rejected by all.

Furthermore, the status quo at the Holy Sites must be upheld. Any change or perceived change to this

delicate balance has the potential to escalate not only within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, but also across the region.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations supports all diplomatic efforts for parties to resume a credible political process that will lead to the end of the occupation and a just and lasting peace in the context of a two-State solution. In this respect, we welcome the discussions and important understandings reached between senior Egyptian, Jordanian, Israeli, Palestinian and United States officials in Aqaba, Jordan and in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt earlier this year. We urge all parties to take concrete steps to implement and extend the commitments made.

The deepening occupation, settlement expansion, high levels of violence against civilians, including acts of

terror, and critically, the absence of a political horizon continue to undermine the hope of reaching a political solution to the conflict and ending the occupation through the achievement of a two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to achieve this goal.

\*\*\*\*\*