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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 16 October 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

The world is witnessing in Palestine the horrors it vowed to save succeeding generations from suffering.

Every rule of international law is being shredded as millions of people are being stripped of their humanity, subjected to wanton killing, starvation and forced transfer, with no end in sight as Israeli occupying forces continue to pound the Gaza Strip, with thousands of missiles and bombs targeting civilian areas by air, land and sea and threats of a ground invasion loom.

There must be a halt to this depravity. The Security Council must make its voice heard and act now to demand an immediate ceasefire to stop the atrocities and save civilian lives. It cannot remain derelict in its Charter duties to preserve international peace and security and to protect civilians in armed conflict, in respect of international law and in accordance with its own resolutions.

In the face of the unbridled and savage violence, war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Palestinian people, we reiterate our three unequivocal calls:

1. Stop the violence and bloodshed.
2. Stop the forced transfer and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian civilians.
3. Ensure immediate emergency humanitarian access and assistance and restoration of basic human necessities – food, water, fuel and electricity – to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population and sustain hospitals treating the wounded and sick.

An immediate ceasefire must be everyone's priority. International law, including humanitarian and human rights law, must be upheld and complied with; there are no exceptions, there is no State above the law and Palestine cannot be excluded from the protections of the law. As recalled by the President of the International Committee of



the Red Cross, Mirjana Spoljaric, “The rules regulating the conduct of hostilities remain fully applicable. The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution must be rigorously applied”.

Civilians must be protected at all times, and civilian objects and infrastructure must never be targeted for attack. Medical and humanitarian personnel and journalists must also be protected. Yet, 10 days since Israel began this aggression and siege on the Palestinian people in Gaza, the loss of human life and destruction it has wreaked are beyond measure. The scenes we are witnessing from Gaza are apocalyptic, the stories of death and tragedy are heart-wrenching.

As of this date, Israeli occupying forces airstrikes have killed over 2,800 Palestinians and 10,000 have been wounded. Horrifyingly, at least one third of the fatalities have been children. Defense for Children International-Palestine reports that, since 7 October, Israel has killed 1,030 Palestinian children in Gaza. It is unconscionable – a Palestinian child is killed every 15 minutes – that this aggression carries on. 936 Palestinian women have been killed by Israeli bombardment. Medics and humanitarians, including 14 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff, have also been killed in the line of duty, along with 11 journalists.

Since 7 October, 47 Palestinian families in their entirety have been massacred by Israel; children, women, men, and elderly and disabled persons bombed to death while sheltering in their homes, totalling at least 500 human lives.

Those are just the casualties known at this time. Over 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza are unaccounted for, feared to be crushed and dead under the rubble of buildings that used to be their homes that have been flattened or charred by Israel’s vicious attacks. In regard to the latter, Human Rights Watch has confirmed Israel’s use of white phosphorous, as it has done in past aggressions, including in 2014, compounding the savagery of its assaults against our civilians.

The death toll in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since this crisis began also continues to climb. Israeli occupying forces and terrorist settlers have killed 58 Palestinians, of them 15 children, and injured more than 1,250 people. In the span of 24 hours, from 14 to 15 October, Israeli occupying forces killed 7 Palestinian children – all boys, with the youngest just 14 years old.

The numbers of persons displaced are shocking. Estimates indicate that over 1 million Palestinians, of a population of 2.3 million, have been now displaced, over 400,000 of them crammed into UNRWA shelters, as a result of Israel’s bombing of civilian areas, laying ruin to thousands of homes and entire neighbourhoods throughout Gaza, and as a result of its military orders for the population to “evacuate” northern Gaza that have triggered a mass exodus of civilians, a criminal act of forcible transfer unconcealed by Israeli officials’ declarations, including vows to turn Gaza into a deserted island, meaning devoid of human life.

Israel is using its orders as a licence to kill anyone who physically cannot leave – including the disabled, and sick and wounded persons – or those who won’t leave their homes in fear of another Nakba, they are all being threatened with death. The fact is that there is little to no transport for Palestinians ordered by Israel to “evacuate” from northern Gaza – no fuel, roads are rubble, there is chaos and fear everywhere. According to the human rights organization Al-Mezan Center: “People are walking – including pregnant women, elderly, children, injured. The walk from Jabaliya to Rafah is almost 9 hours.” Even those attempting to flee are not safe, as witnessed in Israel’s bombing of a convoy of civilians evacuating to the south of Gaza, killing 70 civilians in cold blood.

There is no question that Israel's orders amount to blatant forcible transfer of the population. As stated on 15 October by several international humanitarian organizations (Action against Hunger – Spain, Diakonia, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam International, Save the Children International): “A forced relocation without any guarantees of safety or return would amount to forcible transfer, which is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and codified as a war crime. Israel is bound by international law to ensure the protection of all persons there from harm, and ensure that they are adequately supplied, including by agreeing and facilitating, relief schemes.”

Moreover, the World Health Organization deems Israel's evacuation orders, in particular to hospitals in northern Gaza, as “a death sentence for the sick and injured”, warning that orders to evacuate 22 hospitals treating more than 2,000 people would “further worsen the current humanitarian and public health catastrophe” as fuel reserves for hospitals in Gaza are expected to run out by today, shutting down backup generators that are sustaining them.

That humanitarian catastrophe is happening and will reach unimaginable proportions if Israel is not stopped from using starvation as a weapon, forcing hunger, thirst and searing want and need on Palestinians as it persists with its total humanitarian siege, blocking entry of food, water, medicine, fuel and electricity. They are being tortured as Israel exacts its vengeance on the very same civilians it has occupied and held captive for decades, condemning them to a life of misery simply for existing and remaining in their homeland.

As compassionately stated on 15 October by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazarrini, “Gaza is being strangled and it seems that the world right now has lost its humanity ... Gaza is running out of water, and Gaza is running out of life ... Gaza is now even running out of body bags ... At least 1 million people were forced to flee their homes in one week alone ... Old people, children, pregnant women, people with disabilities are just being deprived of their basic human dignity, and this is a total disgrace! ... Imposing a siege and bombarding civilian infrastructure in a densely populated area will not bring peace and security to the region.”

The Security Council must respond to the appeals for action for a ceasefire called for from every corner of the globe. Failing to halt this insane violence and urgently address the human disaster being inflicted by Israel, the occupying Power, will have a grave and far-reaching impact on the welfare and lives of the millions of Palestinian civilians under Israel's illegal colonial apartheid occupation and on stability and security in the region. As stressed by the Secretary-General, on 15 October, “This horrifying cycle of ever-escalating violence and bloodshed must end”. This abhorrent Nakba against the Palestinian people must end.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 806 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 13 October 2023 ([A/ES-10/955-S/2023/760](#)) 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 a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

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