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

Security Council
Seventy-fourth year

Identical letters dated 1 April 2019 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

It is with deep regret that I must write to you again following the tragic loss of life among Palestinians as a result of the indiscriminate and unlawful force that continues to be used by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population being held captive under its illegal occupation and blockade.

Despite repeated warnings about Israel's escalating aggression and threats, the international community has regrettably taken no meaningful action to avert the loss of life. Despite repeated appeals for the protection of the Palestinian people in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and relevant United Nations resolutions, Palestinian families are again mourning the dead and, with their meagre resources, tending to hundreds more people wounded by the Israeli occupying forces, which have once again unleashed lethal force against peaceful civilian demonstrators.

Over the past weekend, 30 March marked the one-year anniversary of the Great March of Return and the forty-third year in which the Palestinian people have commemorated Land Day. For the fifty-second consecutive week, tens of thousands of Palestinians marched along the eastern border of Gaza, persisting in their calls for an end to the inhumane Israeli blockade of Gaza, an end to the illegal Israeli occupation and to the dispossession of our people, the realization of the right of the Palestine refugees to return and freedom for the Palestinian people. Regrettably, their pleas for an end to this cruel injustice have been to no avail.

Emboldened by the lack of accountability, Israel continues to entrench its occupation, impose its blockade through the collective punishment of the entire population and choose to suppress the Great March of Return through violence. Yet again, Israeli occupying forces used live fire against defenceless civilians, killing four people, among them three youths – Adham Amara (17 years of age), Tamer Abu-Al-Kheir (17) and Belal Najjar (17) – and Mohammad Saed (20), and injuring another 316 persons, including 86 children, 29 women, 3 medics and 6 journalists.



Meanwhile, in the West Bank, occupying forces killed yet another young paramedic, Sajed Mizher (18), on 27 March. He died after being shot in the abdomen by Israeli snipers despite the fact that he was clearly wearing a medical vest and tending to injured persons at the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem.

Contrary to Israeli distortions, the events that have unfolded on the Gaza border since the Great March of Return began in March 2018 can be characterized neither as “clashes”, nor as a “confrontation” between two sides. Rather, they were a series of murderous assaults by the Israeli occupying forces against unarmed Palestinian civilians protesting hundreds of metres away from the barbed-wire fence erected by Israel, which is among its many means to isolate and besiege the Gaza Strip. Over the past year, we have witnessed in broad daylight Israeli soldiers, armed with the most lethal military weaponry and at the command of the highest levels of the Israeli military and government, indiscriminately firing at Palestinian civilians, including children, and in many cases deliberately targeting them, killing them and maiming them, often to the cynical applause and praise of said Israeli officials.

Such use of force constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and must be condemned in the strongest terms possible. An unequivocal message must be sent to the occupying Power that the international community will hold it accountable for these violations and crimes and that such impunity will no longer be tolerated.

In this regard, I must again refer to the findings of the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate incidents that occurred between 30 March and 31 December 2018 in the context of the Great March of Return demonstrations. The Commission found that in all cases, with the exception of one incident on 14 May and one incident on 12 October, there were reasonable grounds to believe that the use of live ammunition by Israeli forces against demonstrators was unlawful, and that demonstrators were shot in violation of their right to life and of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law. It was further found that, within that nine-month period, an estimated 23,313 Palestinians were injured, in addition to 189 fatalities, including 35 children, 3 paramedics, 2 journalists and 5 persons with disabilities.

Tragically, the casualty figures have continued to rise as Israel has persisted in its aggression, since the start of the year, as witnessed in the events of recent days. To date, more than 29,000 Palestinians have been injured, 7,000 of them seriously wounded by live ammunition. Moreover, as reported by United Nations agencies, nearly 26,000 children have required mental health support since the protests began, owing to the widespread trauma and fear that the pervasive violence and sense of insecurity have caused, which has deepened the already dire humanitarian situation and psychosocial conditions in the besieged Gaza Strip.

That Israel continues to respond to such commemorations with such insensitivity, disdain and brutality is a reflection of the impunity it has for too long been accorded and too long exploited, allowing it to persist with its distorted narrative, dismissive of the rights, history and even humanity of the Palestinian people. Absent consequences for this criminal behaviour, it is clear that such gross and systematic commission of crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, will continue, inflicting more suffering and loss on innocent Palestinian civilians and further diminishing prospects for a just and peaceful solution.

It is beyond high time for accountability. The international community cannot remain silent in the face of such flagrant crimes. The Security Council in particular must shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and act to protect civilian lives, prevent further destabilization and tangibly contribute to the achievement of peace and security. In the absence of action, none of this will be

possible and the situation will continue to unravel with disastrous consequences, as was alarmingly conveyed to the Security Council during the briefing on 26 March by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov.

We call for the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions and appeal for the international community's principled positions and solidarity to Palestine to be translated forthwith into serious action. The Charter, international law and United Nations resolutions provide effective tools for this purpose, including to ensure accountability, which is central to peace and justice. This includes the provisions of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which, inter alia, calls upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between Israel and the territories that it has occupied since 1967. We urge States to act individually and collectively to ensure that neither recognition, nor support, is extended to the occupying Power for its illegal activities and to pursue concrete accountability measures in the face of continued violations, including all human rights violations against the Palestinian people, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

This letter is in follow-up to our 663 letters regarding the ongoing crisis 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 25 March 2019 (A/ES-10/815-S/2019/261), 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, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be 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**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations