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

Security Council  
Seventy-sixth year

## Identical letters dated 18 May 2021 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

Absent international accountability, Israel, the occupying Power, carries on with its war crimes against the Palestinian people, trampling every human right and causing widespread death, injury and wanton destruction.

The Security Council's paralysis in particular has led Israel to again believe that it has the green light to kill Palestinians and that it can perpetrate its crimes without repercussions. As I write to you, Palestinian children are being killed, bodies maimed and buried in the rubble of their homes, hospitals attacked, buildings flattened and civilian infrastructure destroyed by a savage Israeli onslaught that is in flagrant and grave breach of every rule of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the countless United Nations resolutions that remain unimplemented to this day.

To save human lives, immediate action is needed to bring a halt to this Israeli military aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly now in the besieged Gaza Strip, where entire families are being killed and over 50,000 people have fled in fear to shelter in 58 schools and installations run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), praying for safety under the blue flag of the United Nations, but in a place where no one is safe from Israel's missiles and bombs, and all as the world looks on.

The priority right now must be to stop the killing and destruction. But calls for a ceasefire that ignore the fact of Israel's impunity and that attempt to return to an unjust and untenable "status quo", whereby Israel is permitted to carry on with its illegal occupation and its persecution and oppression of Palestinians, wherever they may be, are unacceptable and will only consign our people to further oppression, misery and loss.

As we have continually done, we thus call again for accountability for all of these crimes and serious action to address the root causes of this grave injustice that



have never been resolved: the mass expulsion and forced displacement of Palestinians for decades, the colonization and annexation of their land and the denial and violation of their inalienable human rights. Only such action can change the reality we face and bring forth a day when justice and lasting peace and security are possible.

The international laws to guarantee such an outcome exist; the international framework, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions and international consensus exist; what is needed is the political will to demand and ensure respect for the law and for human life. Rogue states like Israel that do not respect international law and breach it with utter contempt should not be applauded and appeased by the international community but should rather be denounced and held responsible for their crimes.

The future we want and the United Nations we need demands that this be the case without exception. States must stop the exceptional treatment of Israel, the occupying Power, which has only encouraged this impunity and allowed for the wanton killing, maiming and destruction to go on endlessly, shredding lives, hopes, the potential for peace and any credibility of the international system.

Day after day, letter after letter, the number of Palestinians killed continues to rise, despite our pleas and the appeals of countries and peoples around the world for the Security Council to uphold its duty to maintain international peace and security and protect innocent civilian lives. As of today, the Israeli military aggression on Gaza, which began on 10 May, has killed 213 Palestinians, including 61 children, 36 women and 16 elderly persons, and nearly 1,500 people have been wounded.

Also, since 7 May, Israeli occupying forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem have killed 25 Palestinians. Since the beginning of Israel's raids at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and throughout the forced displacement campaign being waged against Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem, the use of live ammunition and lethal force by occupying forces has only intensified, causing widespread civilian casualties. In addition to those killed, at least 5,000 Palestinians have been injured by the Israeli occupying forces, including many children.

As Israel's excessive use of force against Palestinians continues on both sides of the Green Line (the pre-1967 borders), Palestinian citizens in Israel also continue to be brutally assaulted by Israeli police and extremist groups. Although the main victims of these assaults, it is Palestinians who are being arrested. At least 800 Palestinians have been arrested and, of the 116 indictments in the Israel courts, all have been against Palestinians, with zero indictments filed against Jewish extremist groups such as "Lehava", "La Familia", "Price Tag", "Hilltop Youth" and the gangs and individuals. Such blatant discrimination against Palestinian citizens is just further proof of Israel's status as an Apartheid regime.

Meanwhile, in the Gaza Strip, Israeli warplanes carried out the deadliest attack in recent days, killing 43 Palestinians, including 10 children and 16 women, in a single overnight campaign from Sunday into Monday, that targeted residential buildings. This included attacks that completely destroyed two residential buildings belonging to the Abu al-Ouf and al-Kolaq families, killing 30 people, 11 of them children. As stressed by Defense for Children International – Palestine Section: "Systemic impunity ensures there are no safe spaces for Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation. They can be killed at any moment with no accountability."

As reported by United Nations agencies, the situation of children is dire, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reporting that the ages of the Palestinian children killed in Gaza range between 6 months and 17 years. Over half of them were under 10 years old, and children make up nearly a third of civilian

casualties; those who have survived may be terrorized and traumatized for life as Israel persists in indiscriminately, yet deliberately, attacking civilian areas in grave breach of international humanitarian law. We reiterate our call in this regard for Israel, its military forces and settlers to be included in the list of parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict, and we call once again for international protection for the Palestinian civilian population, including and in particular for children, which they are in desperate need of, and entitled to, under international law.

In the above-mentioned attacks targeting residential buildings, two senior Palestinian doctors were also killed by the Israeli bombing of their homes. Dr. Ayman Abu al-Ouf was killed, along with his two children, as was Dr. Muin Ahmad al-Aloul, along with family members, all while sheltering in the sanctity of their homes. Such killings further reveal Israel's intent to decimate Palestinian capacities in all fields, including the medical field.

In this regard, it must be stressed that Israel also continues to bomb main roads leading to hospitals and health-care facilities, including an attack yesterday on the central and only coronavirus disease (COVID-19) testing lab in Gaza, the Al-Rimal health clinic, rendering it inoperable. The central and only COVID-19 testing lab in Gaza is no longer functional after the Israeli bombing of the Al-Rimal health clinic. The Palestine Red Crescent Headquarters in Gaza City has also sustained damage.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, six hospitals and nine primary health-care centres have been damaged, with one centre suffering severe damage. One hospital is not functioning owing to lack of fuel. Such destruction of medical facilities is worsening the dire status of the health system in Gaza, which was already on the verge of collapse before the pandemic, owing to Israel's crippling and dehumanizing 14-year blockade. The Israeli military aggression has also brought a halt to the COVID-19 vaccine campaign in Gaza, where the vaccination rate is only 1.9 per cent. A large number of precious vaccines will soon expire if the vaccination campaign remains suspended owing to Israeli aggression, risking the further spread of this deadly pandemic. We echo the call of the Executive Director of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, for the protection of health workers and medical infrastructure at all times, as required under international humanitarian law.

We further appeal for humanity to address the extraordinary humanitarian needs of our people in Gaza, including for food and other basic life necessities, as Israel intentionally inflicts a man-made disaster, with far-reaching repercussions. As stressed by the Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa of the World Food Programme (WFP), Corinne Fleischer, in her call for emergency assistance to the Palestinian civilian population: "The majority of the population cannot withstand further shocks and the current situation could unleash a crisis that could spill into the entire region."

We urge the international community to respond to the appeals for humanitarian support. We call for urgent funding to UNRWA to enable the continuity of its indispensable, life-saving assistance to Palestine refugees and the tens of thousands who have been displaced from their homes, including over 2,500 people who have been rendered homeless, losing everything in this criminal onslaught, and who are in need of food, shelter, blankets and hygiene supplies. We call also for donor support for UNICEF, WFP, WHO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches Palestinian civilians most in need.

Swift action is required by the international community on both the political and humanitarian fronts. Despite widespread international condemnation, including

protests by millions of people of conscience around the world, Israel, the occupying Power, remains emboldened by the silence of the Security Council and the absence of concrete measures to hold it accountable under international law. As long as action is delayed, it is clear that Israel will continue its atrocities against Palestinians, wherever they may be, whether in Gaza and Jerusalem or in Lod and Haifa.

The Council must rise to its responsibilities and show the world that it is capable of stopping such acts of aggression and protecting human lives. And there is absolutely no contradiction between the efforts by the Council and ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring a halt to the onslaught. They are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary and absolutely imperative and urgent. Those who undermine collective action must bear responsibility for the civilian lives being claimed by this Israeli aggression. Arguments of equivocation are unacceptable and wrongly portray this crisis as one between two parties on equal footing, distorting the reality that this is the case of a belligerent occupier and an occupied civilian population and the rules of international law apply without exception.

The devastation being wrought across Gaza in these moments is unconscionable, making it incumbent upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, as well as the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to deploy all measures possible to ensure Israel's compliance with international law. This must go beyond statements and translate into action, using all the diplomatic and legal tools at the international community's disposal to ensure accountability and justice for the many victims and to salvage the prospects for peace and security.

To conclude, we salute the steadfast Palestinian people who persist in their just and dignified struggle for self-determination and freedom and justice. We salute the refugees in exile who yearn for their rightful return. We salute the heroism of Palestinians standing against forced displacement from their land. We salute the resilience spirit of the Palestinian people who teach life in the face of colonial occupation.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 719 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 17 May 2021 ([A/ES-10/865-S/2021/476](#)) 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 circulated 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