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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 9 April 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

The situation in Occupied Palestine continues to worsen as Israel intensifies its human rights violations and war crimes against the Palestinian people. The occupying Power has escalated its appropriation of Palestinian homes, lands and properties, seeking to accelerate the forced transfer of Palestinian civilians, especially areas in and around occupied East Jerusalem, and its settlement colonization schemes. It is beyond apparent by now that this is all part of a systematic, deliberate plan to remove Palestinians – i.e. ethnically cleanse these areas – in preparation for annexation.

As underscored in recent letters, Palestinian families in the Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem remain at imminent risk of forced eviction and mass dispossession due to Israel's unlawful and inhumane policies of forcibly removing Palestinians and replacing them with Jewish settlers, particularly in and around Jerusalem. Such policies have spiked in recent months as Israel blatantly entrenches its nearly 54-year belligerent occupation in grave breach of international law and contempt for the will of the international community, including decisions of the Security Council.

In occupied East Jerusalem, Israel's systematic policy of forced displacement is haunting hundreds of Palestinian families who face impending home demolitions. On 24 March, occupation forces demolished three Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, one in the Shu'fat refugee camp and two in Jabal al-Mukabbir. Also in Jabal al-Mukabbir, despite attempts to obtain the nearly impossible occupation-issued building permit, a Palestinian family was forced to self-demolish its home on 4 April to avoid the heavy demolition fees punitively imposed by occupation authorities. On 7 April, Israeli demolition orders were also issued against 63 Palestinian structures in Khirbat al-Ras al-Ahmar, near Tubas, threatening the homes and livelihoods of the entire community. Yesterday, 8 April, dozens of Israeli settlers accompanied by security guards seized three houses in Silwan, in occupied East Jerusalem.



Israel constantly resorts to the unjustifiable claims that Palestinian homes are built without occupation-issued permits, purposely restricting Palestinian development and growth in order to facilitate expansion of its settler colonies throughout Occupied Palestine. As Israeli human rights group B'Tselem points out: "This practice of not granting permits allows Israel to confine the Palestinian people to small, crowded, impoverished and disconnected enclaves, leaving the rest of the land free for Israeli settlement".

Just this week, Israeli occupation authorities announced plans to yet again expand the illegal settlement of "Har Homa" (Jabal Abu Ghneim) with the construction of another 540 illegal housing units. Once more, this belies the claim that Israel's annexation plans have been "suspended" as, in reality, they are only advancing by the day, destroying the contiguity of the Palestinian land and the prospects of achieving the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

This colonial settlement campaign, which is perpetuating the supremacy of one group over another, i.e. apartheid, violates every principle and prohibition under international humanitarian law regarding situations of foreign occupation, as well as countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that specifically prohibit attempts to alter the character, demographic composition and status of the occupied territory, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. In this regard, we recall Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), by which the Council, inter alia, unequivocally condemned "all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions".

Faced with incessant dispossession and displacement, the Palestinian people marked the forty-fifth anniversary of Land Day on 30 March. On that occasion, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics issued a statement indicating the territories seized by Israel since its creation and that Israel now controls 85 per cent of historic Palestine with the increased establishment of illegal settlements, whose settlers now number 700,000 in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The United Nations Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk, has observed that "the political purpose of the Israeli settlement enterprise has always been to establish facts on the ground and to obstruct Palestinian self-determination".

Israel's settlement annexation drive has unquestionably emboldened settler violence, with continued rampages by religiously fanatic and extremist settlers in past weeks creating an ever more coercive environment for the Palestinian civilian population. On 25 March, a settler mob attacked the village of Khidr, near Bethlehem, causing injuries to many residents. In separate incidents on 31 March, settlers stormed archaeological sites in Samu', near Al-Khalil (Hebron), and Sabastiyah, near Nablus, attacking nearby residents and preventing them from accessing agricultural lands.

All of this is occurring under the watch of the Israeli occupying army, which permits settlers to raid such archaeological and religious sites and even facilitates their access while obstructing Palestinian access to the sites and their own lands. According to B'Tselem: "These actions are part of a joint strategy by the settlers and Israeli authorities to systematically block Palestinian access to land – one acre, field, fertile plot, grove or pasture at a time – for decades on end, and take effective control of it. This way the state transfers the means of livelihood of Palestinians into the hands of Israelis. Settler violence is the state's unofficial, privatized arm that serves to gradually achieve this goal".

I must bring your attention to the brutal killing of yet another innocent Palestinian civilian, coinciding with the dangerous increase in settler violence. Two days ago, on 7 April, an elderly Palestinian woman, Shafiqa Abu Aqeel, aged 73, was killed after being deliberately run over by an Israeli settler in Samu'. Once again, Israel has yet to come forward with signs of accountability, further reaffirming its wilful failure to respect its obligations as an occupying Power under international law.

Settler violence has also been emboldened by the pervasive violence committed by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and excessive attacks against civilians. On 24 March, two Palestinians were shot and injured when Israeli occupation forces erected checkpoints at roads leading to the towns of Bi'r Nabala and Qalandiya. The following two days witnessed large-scale raids in Al-Khalil and Jerusalem, in which occupation forces arrested and assaulted dozens of Palestinians, including former and current officials.

On 24 and 25 March, Israeli occupation forces attacked several peaceful anti-settlement rallies across Occupied Palestine – in Bayt Dajan, near Nablus, where, a week earlier, occupation forces had shot and killed Atef Hanaysha, aged 45, as well as in Mughayyir, near Ramallah, and elsewhere – using excessive and lethal force against unarmed civilians, injuring dozens. Occupation forces routinely use life-threatening means to crush such rallies, which are a legitimate form of protest against this illegal occupation and which seek to draw international attention to Israel's ongoing theft and colonization of Palestinian land.

On 1 April, Israeli occupation forces shot and injured two Palestinians in Nablus and Tubas. On the same day, occupation forces escorted a convoy of fanatic settlers into Nablus, opening fire on Palestinians during the course of the state-sponsored settler intrusion into the city. On 2 April, five Palestinians were injured by Israeli gunfire during a military raid on the Askar refugee camp, near Nablus. On 5 April, Israeli soldiers fired at a vehicle at a military checkpoint, killing a Palestinian man and injuring his wife. Osama Mansour, 42, was fatally shot in the head, while his wife sustained bullet wounds.

The situation in Gaza also remains extremely worrisome. Backed by warplanes and ever-present drones, occupation forces continue to infiltrate Gaza's shores and agricultural lands, indiscriminately attacking civilians and further damaging Gaza's already devastated economy and infrastructure. On 24 March, Israeli gunboats fired at Palestinian fishermen in numerous attacks. In a constant campaign of intimidation and harassment, occupation forces have long been targeting Palestinian fishermen, causing death and injury to them and a loss of livelihood, compounding the socioeconomic hardships already being inflicted by Israel's nearly 14-year blockade of Gaza and its successive military aggressions.

Other tools used by Israel to destroy the viability and contiguity of the Palestinian land include denying Palestinians their freedom of movement, with East Jerusalem being the prime target in recent months. Last month, Israel also undertook punitive measures against the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riad al-Malki, following his meeting with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Shortly thereafter, the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq issued a statement stressing the following:

It is imperative that all states, including states party to the Rome Statute, condemn Israel's unlawful targeting of Palestinians for their engagement with the International Criminal Court in its ongoing investigation into the Situation in Palestine. Palestinians have the right to accountability, and to struggle to bring to an end the root causes underpinning Israel's disinformation campaign and quashing of freedom of opinion and expression in the occupied Palestinian territory, namely an end to the 13-year land and naval closure of the Gaza Strip,

an end to the 53-year occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and an end to the 72-year apartheid on both sides of the Green Line.

Another recent example of Israel's restrictions on movement and expression occurred on 6 April, when occupation forces raided a hotel in occupied East Jerusalem to disband an event on Palestinian elections, detaining several attendees. The event, called for by Palestinian civil society organizations, was slated to be held under the title "International Law Guarantees Our Right to Vote". Such actions by the occupying Power prove Israel's intentions to disrupt the upcoming elections by intensifying pressure and attacks on Palestinian Jerusalemites aimed at undermining their political participation and disconnecting them from their Palestinian brethren and severing the city from its natural Palestinian environs. As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs noted: "Israeli measures have increasingly cut off East Jerusalem, once the focus of political, commercial, religious and cultural life for the entire Palestinian population of the occupied Palestinian territory, from the rest of the West Bank and from the Gaza Strip".

Despite the international community's increasing cognizance of the magnitude of these grave crimes and violations, persistent legal and political failures have allowed Israel's occupation and de facto annexation to carry on with impunity and absolute disregard for international law, including countless relevant United Nations resolutions. The Palestinian people have as persistently sought justice through peaceful, legitimate international mechanisms for decades, yet with regrettably little to no progress in enforcing a change to Israel's rogue behaviour.

In order to remain consistent with the values of international law and uphold a rules-based order, it is the obligation of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to oppose Israel's crimes and violations through concerted action and effective measures to counter such blatant defiance of international law. Only this can bring an end to the impunity and make possible the realization of a just solution that guarantees respect for the national and human rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom, and establishes lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace and security based on two States living side by side on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

Month after month, year after year, condemnations of Israel's crimes and violations are heard. Yet we continue to await real action to uphold the law towards ending this historic injustice. The Palestinian people and their leadership thus continue their appeals to the international community for solidarity, support and urgent collective measures for accountability, which are essential for the attainment of justice, the central pillar of any future peace.

While making this appeal, we reaffirm our deep gratitude to all peoples and countries all around the world who continue to support and stand with the Palestinian people and their just cause. In this regard, we must recall that this week marks the eighteenth anniversary of the death of Tom Hurndall, a 22-year-old British activist who was shot and killed by an Israeli sniper while attempting to rescue Palestinian children from Israeli military gunfire. Like thousands of Palestinian families, Tom's family has yet to receive justice for the killing of its son. Action for accountability is imperative to deter the taking of more innocent lives and the devastation of more innocent families and to salvage the possibility of a just solution that will serve as the foundation of genuine peace and stability in the Middle East.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 709 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 22 March 2021 (A/ES-10/855-S/2021/280), 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
