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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 14 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

As I write to you, Palestinian children are being killed, wounded, orphaned and traumatized in a barbaric Israeli onslaught on civilians that is being perpetrated in broad daylight in flagrant breach of every rule of humanitarian law and every norm of human decency and morality.

Yet, despite our repeated pleas and the appeals of countries and peoples from around the world, the Security Council remains paralysed, failing to uphold its mandate to maintain international peace and security and protect innocent civilian lives.

As of today, the current Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip, which began on 10 May, has killed 122 Palestinians, including 31 children and 19 women, and more than 830 people have been wounded. Four of the children killed were Palestine refugee children, all under the age of 12 and students in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and were from the same family, two siblings and two cousins. And in the West Bank today, Israeli occupying forces have killed 6 Palestinians and injured more than 100 others in violent attacks on protesters in various cities and villages.

Rather than celebrating Eid al-Fitr, mothers are burying their babies, children are burying their fathers and mothers, and families are being decimated, among them 13 people killed in a bombing yesterday, including a pregnant woman, her husband and their 4 children and 5 other relatives, in horrific scenes reminiscent of Israel's 2014 war on Gaza, which killed multiple families in their entirety.

Despite the callous narrative spread by Israel's constant dehumanization and demonization of the Palestinian people, these human lives are being mourned, tears are flowing, the pain is searing, lives have been forever ruined. And so many more lives are at risk as the Security Council remains shamefully silent even as the violations only mount by the hour, causing more death and devastation.



The Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund, Henrietta Fore, has warned: “The situation is at a tipping point. The level of violence and the impact on children is devastating. We are on the brink of a full-scale war. In any war, children – all children – suffer first and suffer most”.

There is no question: this premeditated, deliberate Israeli military aggression against unarmed civilians constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity. In addition to missile strikes from war planes against Gaza, the biggest prison on earth, blockaded by Israel by air, land and sea for 14 years, occupying forces have begun a ground invasion, portending only more carnage, as Israeli officials openly vow to kill and destroy, using the most lethal weaponry against an unarmed civilian population, including weaponry banned by international law. But, as we all know by now, the law means nothing to Israel. Surely, the singling-out of Israel – exempted from the rule of law and appeased for decades by the international community no matter the gravity of its violations – has led to this lawless situation, leaving the Palestinian people at the mercy of this cruel colonial occupation regime.

In addition to the killing and injury of so many civilians, the occupying Power also continues to cause wanton and deliberate destruction of civilian objects, including homes, in collective punishment of the civilian population and in yet further grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Already, over 500 homes have been destroyed or severely damaged, leading to the displacement of thousands of people, yet again. In addition, Israeli air strikes have caused damage to 23 schools, several health centres and medical clinics, factories, roads, electricity networks and other vital civilian infrastructure, including the destruction of all police headquarters. Also, reminiscent of past Israeli bombardments of Gaza, four UNRWA installations have been hit and damaged by air strikes.

At the same time, Israeli barbarity against Palestinians continues across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as within Israel, with violent, hateful, racist attacks targeting civilians solely for being Palestinians. Jewish supremacist settlers continue rampaging in Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem, in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Al-Tur and other areas, terrorizing families and causing injuries and damage to homes and properties, including by smashing windows and breaking down doors as they try to attack Palestinians in their own homes.

Israeli settler gangs, emboldened by the occupier’s ruthless violence against the occupied population, are also raiding Palestinian villages elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. And in the streets of Jaffa, Haifa, Lod and other cities, these same supremacist mobs are roaming the streets harassing, intimidating, assaulting, and even lynching, Palestinians. This is the so-called “democratic” Israel, where more than 50 laws have been legislated discriminating against Palestinian citizenry, who are left not only without the protection of the law, but without the protection of the police from these marauding mobs.

Israeli provocations against Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif also continue at fever pitch. Extremist settlers have been joined by far-right, terrorist members of the Israeli government allied with the Israeli Prime Minister in a constant barrage of inflammatory rhetoric and incitement, threatening further crimes against the Palestinian people and this most holy site and violating the historic and legal status quo.

And yet, the Security Council – despite the sincere efforts of a majority of its members – remains unable to find its voice and speak in unison against these heinous crimes, obstructed by one from upholding its responsibilities to act to stop these attacks and prevent the further destabilization and implosion of the situation. Rather than silence, the Council should be firmly calling for an immediate halt to the attacks on civilians and civilian properties, for a halt to the incitement and incursions against Al-Aqsa Mosque, and for the protection of civilians.

The call for respect for international law, including for the Security Council's own resolutions, should be unequivocal, not impossible. This includes not only the Council's resolutions on the Palestine question from 1948 to the present, but also its lofty resolutions on the protection of civilians, including the protection of children in armed conflict, the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities, and the protection of religious and cultural sites. But none are being upheld, even as Israel, the occupying Power, grossly and systematically violates them in blatant contempt and mockery of the Council and its authority.

Rather than decrying recent events as though they occurred in a vacuum, the Council should heed its own decisions vis-à-vis the peaceful resolution of conflicts and recall and address the root causes of this catastrophe: the unending dispossession and oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel, a colonial occupation regime, and one openly practising apartheid, violating every norm of international law.

Once again, we call upon the Security Council to act in respect of its Charter duty to maintain international peace and security. The Palestinian people cannot be left without protection at the mercy of an occupying Power armed to the teeth. The pretext that Israel "has a right to security and a right to defend itself", while denying these same rights to the Palestinian people is a shameful pretext that flies in the face of international law and human morality.

What Israel is seeking to "defend" is its illegal occupation, insisting on its control of Palestinian land and Palestinian lives and, if possible, their very erasure, including of Palestinian children. When this distorted narrative of "self-defence" is parroted by those claiming to be champions of human rights and international law, it effectively gives Israel the permission to carry on with its crimes, ignoring that this illegitimate occupation and over 70 years of Israeli uprooting of Palestinians and denial of their rights are the source of all these ills, and ignoring the total asymmetry in this situation of an occupier and oppressor against occupied and oppressed people. This not only exposes hypocrisy and an extreme lack of empathy, but amounts to complicity.

There must be a clear demand for an end to all attacks, provocations and incitement and for full respect of international law, including humanitarian law. There must be a demand for a halt to Israel's criminal aggression against Gaza and a cessation of all other illegal Israeli actions and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including a halt to its illegal colonization and ethnic cleansing schemes.

There must be concrete action for accountability, as demanded and obligated by international law, to hold Israel and its government, military and settlers responsible for all of their crimes against the Palestinian people. We appeal to the international community to act now to save human lives and for the sake of justice and peace.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 716 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 12 May 2021 (A/ES-10/862-S/2021/461) 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
