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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 23 July 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

I regret that I must again draw your attention to the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to escalating illegal policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power. As we continue to warn about the intensity of Israeli attacks and human rights violations perpetrated against the Palestinian people, Israel's impunity rages unabated owing to the lack of accountability, whereby the apartheid occupation is emboldened and entrenched by the minute before the world's eyes.

Regrettably, decades of international inaction have granted Israel a licence to do as it pleases, even commit war crimes, without consequences. This year alone, the scope and scale of coordinated violations by Israeli occupation forces and extremist Israeli settlers expose the systematic, Government-led and State-sponsored campaign of oppression targeting Palestinians wherever they may be. Continued appeasement of Israel in the international arena has been in disregard of international law as well as the rights and concerns of the occupied population and their very right to self-determination and freedom. This shameful reality has only benefited the illegal occupier's colonization enterprise.

In this context, the recent period has witnessed a marked escalation in settler violence, home demolitions, forced displacement and arrests and killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, as Israel openly exploits the vulnerability of the international community's fight against the pandemic as a chance to further entrench its illegal occupation.

Such exploitation of global circumstances by Israel, the occupying Power, has heightened the insecurity of our people, who face constant and coordinated attacks by both Israeli occupation forces and settler militias. The Israeli non-governmental organization Breaking the Silence has published a new report consisting of 36 testimonies from former soldiers, concluding that "there is no action nor will from the government or the military to stop settlers from attacking". The level of State-



sponsored incitement and terrorism is reaching a tipping point, as settler violence is being encouraged, even if it means killing Palestinians. As stated by Breaking the Silence: “Settler violence is not committed in a vacuum. They are the biggest criminal enterprise in Israel, and not only are they immune from repercussions but they receive embracement from the military and government.”

The sharp increase in settler violence, aided, abetted and permitted by the occupying Power, exposes how it uses any and all means to entrench its oppression of the Palestinian people, even if it means using the most extreme, far-right elements of Israeli society to advance its colonial and annexationist schemes. According to the Israeli non-governmental organization B’Tselem, the first six months of 2021 witnessed a 33 per cent increase in settler attacks compared with the same period last year. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli occupation forces and settlers injured more Palestinians in attacks in the first six months of this year alone than in the entire previous year.

This unjust reality proves how the so-called “only democracy in the Middle East” is imposing an apartheid situation in which illegal settlers are heavily prioritized, legally privileged and physically enabled over the occupied Palestinian population through a two-tier system built on discrimination and oppression. This affects every aspect of Palestinian life and all of the fundamental human rights of Palestinians.

In this period of time, as high temperatures and heatwaves are felt globally, the Palestinian people’s right to water is among the rights being violated daily. They continue to suffer severe water shortages owing to Israel’s illegal extraction of aquifers and deep wells and its diversion of water in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for the benefit of illegal settlers. According to data collected by the United Nations, the World Bank and numerous non-governmental organizations, Israelis consume four to six times more water than Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank. While illegal Israeli settlers have access to 300 litres of water per person per day, Palestinians have access to only 70 litres – well below the World Health Organization’s minimum standard of 100 litres per day.

Owing to the shocking disparity in water consumption between Palestinians and Israelis, Palestinian families are forced to resort to only 10 litres per capita per day, with Israel’s theft of water creating an ever more coercive environment, where Palestinians are dependent on the occupier for unpredictable and restrictive access to water. Such inhumane policies clearly aim to deprive the Palestinian population and restrict their development, forcing them to pay for overpriced water supplies from the occupying Power’s companies, which directly supply illegal settlements with water exploited from Palestinian land. As highlighted by the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq, “accordingly, Palestinian lands cannot be irrigated and in many cases are, therefore, abandoned, and ultimately designated for colonial settlement expansion”.

Israel also confiscates and destroys Palestinian water resources, as happened in last week’s destruction of a water reservoir. On 15 July, Israeli occupation forces raided Bayt Dajan, near Nablus, and demolished the village’s water reservoir, resulting in flooding and damaging nearby lands. The reservoir had a capacity of 500 cubic metres (500,000 litres) of water and was used for consumption and for irrigating crops. According to the latest report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, “restrictions on access to water and the depletion of the coastal aquifer make the Palestinian population among the most water-stressed in the world, and the situation is exacerbated by climate change”.

In addition to the coercive environment imposed through the exploitation, confiscation and destruction of natural resources, Israel’s systematic policy of forced

displacement through home demolitions and the destruction of property also persists unabated in this time of pandemic. On 13 July, Israeli occupation forces demolished agricultural and livestock structures in Nabi Samu'il, near Jerusalem. On the same day, Israeli occupation forces raided the village of Qusrah, near Nablus, and demolished structures, razed farmlands and uprooted dozens of trees. On 14 July, Israeli occupation forces raided the Palestinian Bedouin community of Qabbun, near Ramallah, and destroyed 11 residential structures and multiple livestock shelters.

On 14 July, Israeli occupation forces demolished dozens of homes and structures in the Palestinian Bedouin community of Ras al-Tin, near Ramallah, deliberately rendering hundreds more families homeless and even more vulnerable. As a result, 84 Palestinians, including 53 children and 14 women, have been forcibly displaced as Israel pursues its illegal colonization and annexation schemes. The next day, Israeli occupation forces again raided Khirbat Humsah, destroying and confiscating donor-funded structures provided days after Israel had destroyed the entire community, for the seventh time, on 7 July. Here, we echo the call of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Lynn Hastings: "Israeli authorities should immediately halt all further demolitions of Palestinian homes and possessions, allow the humanitarian community to provide shelter, food and water to this most vulnerable community and let these people rebuild their homes in their current location and stay there in safety and dignity."

At the same time, Israel persists with all of its repressive measures against Palestinian civilians, including massive arrest campaigns and raids. The wave of mass arrests and large-scale raids by Israeli occupation forces completely ignores the state of emergency that remains in place in the occupied West Bank owing to the pandemic, undermining the safety and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population, in grave violation of international humanitarian law. This includes systematic attacks and violence against Palestinian humanitarian civil society and the intimidation of human rights defenders, including the raids and closure of Health Work Committees, and the arbitrary detention of its staff. The systematic targeting of such health-care infrastructure by the occupying Power is clearly aimed at debilitating the capacities of Palestinian society. By exercising control over and constraining the operations and functions of Palestinian civil society, those capacities are effectively undermined and the Palestinian people collectively punished.

Health Work Committees is a Palestinian non-governmental health and developmental organization. In the context of the extremely difficult circumstances imposed by the occupation and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Health Work Committees provides health services to particularly marginalized and impoverished communities, including specific programmes on women's health. In fact, Health Work Committees established one of the leading clinics for diagnosing breast cancer and has for years utilized its entire capacities to support the Palestinian people's inviolable right to health. During the pandemic, Health Work Committees has been on the front lines, providing health care, raising awareness and assisting communities through mobile clinics, providing about 12 per cent of vital health services.

Recent disturbing incidents in this regard include a raid by Israeli occupation forces in the early hours of 9 June at the main headquarters of Health Work Committees in occupied Bireh, adjacent to the city of Ramallah, damaging and seizing medical and electronic equipment and issuing a military order to close the headquarters for six months. Several weeks later, the Israeli occupation forces unlawfully detained the executive director of Health Work Committees and prominent health-care provider and expert, Dr. Shatha Odeh. In this regard, it has been documented that Health Work Committees staff detained by the Israeli occupation forces have been subjected to torture and ill treatment and denied their right to a fair trial.

For years, Palestinian civil society organizations, including Health Work Committees, have reported that they have endured a grievous repressive working environment as their day-to-day operations have been stymied by Israel's illegal policies and practices. Clearly, such assaults constitute grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As stated by Amnesty International: "The targeting of [Health Work Committees] is part of a wider attack by Israel against Palestinian civil society organizations. Instead of criminalizing organizations providing vital health services, the Israeli authorities should be ending their institutionalized discrimination and systematic oppression of Palestinians."

It is clear that Israel's attack on Health Work Committees is part of the long-running, illegal and cruel policies of this occupation and its apartheid regime against the Palestinian people. Under this racist and repressive regime, the degree to which individuals are able to access health care, including essential vaccines, depends on which type of identity card they hold, that is, their ethnicity as Palestinians, or the religion that they are affiliated with, effectively constituting medical apartheid. Such unlawful and racist practices, restricting medical access for Palestinians and violating their right to health, in addition to recurrent attacks on health facilities, including in the Gaza Strip, have exacerbated the already fragile health situation in the State of Palestine, worsening it by the minute.

Also, on 14 July, Israeli occupation forces arrested 45 students of Birzeit University after they had been handcuffed, blindfolded and then forced to sit on the road before being taken to an unknown destination in military vehicles. This is yet another example of how far Israel is willing to go to attack Palestinian academic freedom and access to education and other fundamental rights, contrary to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The fact is that massive arrest campaigns and raids by the occupying Power are daily occurrences throughout Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli occupation forces carried out 163 arrest operations throughout the occupied West Bank during the first two weeks of July and detained 134 Palestinians, including 6 children. On 14 July, Israeli occupation forces also conducted predawn raids and home invasions across the occupied West Bank, arresting 16 Palestinians from Nablus, 11 from Ramallah, 4 from Jerusalem and 2 from Al-Khalil (Hebron), among them children and young people aged between 15 and 20.

Palestinians in Israeli prisons also continue to be subjected to inhumane treatment, including physical and psychological torture. On 21 July, a Palestinian man died after being arrested by Israeli occupation forces on a traffic citation for driving a vehicle without a licence. Abdo Tamimi, aged 43, died while being held in a "torture room" at the infamous Maskubiyah detention centre and interrogation facility in Jerusalem. Tamimi's four children and unborn child will now live the rest of their lives without their father and without any genuine prospect for justice. The following day, Israeli occupation forces arrested seven of Tamimi's relatives for protesting against his murder.

The inhumane treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons is a primary reflection of the barbarity of the occupation. In this regard, we must also highlight the case of the Palestinian parliamentarian, Khalida Jarrar, who has been held in Israeli administrative detention without trial or charge since her arbitrary arrest in October 2019. Ms. Jarrar's daughter, Suha, aged 31, tragically died recently, yet Israel prevented Ms. Jarrar from attending her young daughter's funeral despite repeated appeals from States and human rights groups. Indeed, the occupying Power does not miss any opportunity to show how cruel it truly is. "All I wanted was to bid my

daughter a final farewell, with a kiss on her forehead and to tell her I love her as much as I love Palestine”, Khalida Jarrar wrote in a painful message from an Israeli prison.

As we conclude the first half of 2021, the international community has seen the dangerous effects and consequences of this prolonged occupation and the relentless Israeli campaign violating international law and the global consensus regarding a just solution for the Palestine question. Despite repeated statements and condemnations, Israel’s grave breaches of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions, have not been met with accountability, allowing Israel to defy the Security Council and the will of the international community without consequence. Had Israel been treated like any other State – not a State above the law – it would likely think twice about its actions, crimes and violations. Accountability is imperative for deterrence, for protecting civilian lives and for making peace and security possible.

With tools and mechanisms for measures to hold Israel accountable widely available, the second half of 2021 must be utilized differently. The time for mere words of criticism has passed. It is time to translate statements and positions into action. The international community must act without delay to ensure that accountability matters and that international law and United Nations resolutions are credibly upheld despite the blatant attempts to undermine their foundation. Through its Charter-mandated responsibilities, the Security Council must lead the way in utilizing all available diplomatic, political and legal mechanisms and capabilities to assert international law as a source of authority on the Palestine question.

Israel’s crimes and violations clearly demonstrate its intent to maintain the status quo of colonization, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, blockade and repression. As warned by the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon: “What has become increasingly clear in recent years is Israel’s intent to maintain its structural domination and oppression of the Palestinian people through indefinite occupation. This gives the dual legal regimes imposed in Palestinian territories by Israel – together with the inhumane and abusive acts that are carried out against Palestinians – new significance, resulting in a situation that arguably constitutes apartheid.” The cornerstone of this dark and unjust reality lies in the absence of any international legal accountability, enabling Israel to act above the law and to persist in its obstruction of the *erga omnes* right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, contrary to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

As the international community commemorated and honoured Nelson Mandela on his International Day on 18 July, Madiba’s legacy continues to be more relevant than ever, especially in Palestine. Nelson Mandela International Day is an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to the values that inspired Madiba in his extraordinary struggle against apartheid and oppression. Like Mr. Mandela, the international community, and in particular the Security Council, must have the will and courage to inspire change wherever injustices occur. To conclude, we recall Mr. Mandela’s words that speak volumes in connection to the unjust reality in Palestine: “Those who conduct themselves with morality, integrity and consistency need not fear the forces of inhumanity and cruelty.”

This letter is in follow-up to our 727 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 19 July 2021 (A/ES-10/874-S/2021/665) 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**  
Minister  
Permanent Observer

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