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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 June 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Business and Human Rights in the Context of COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses around the world, particularly small ones, are suffering from forced closures due to social distancing measures, reduced sales, and the barring of international travel. This has led to mass unemployment and negative economic growth, most often affecting the least fortunate members of society.

However, despite the catastrophic hardships facing businesses and their employees, the Special Rapporteur for the Palestinians alongside a number of antisemitic BDS groups seek to harm companies, their employees, and customers, during the acute global COVID crisis. They do so by operationalizing the OHCHR's discriminatory and defamatory "settlements database".

The promotion of this ill-founded and created list, particularly at a time of extreme global economic disruption, in order to deliberately cause further economic harm, is not based in human rights, but rather guided by discriminatory motives. Additionally, the unique treatment of Israel in this exercise, as with many other United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council initiatives and those promoted by the Special Rapporteur, violates the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of antisemitism.

Indeed, in addition to the lack of due process employed in creating this list and the accompanying libelling of the listed companies, the database represents a radical departure from the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, as well as all other internationally recognized business and human rights standards.

A prime example of this destructive campaign is the participation, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, of the Special Rapporteur in a webinar hosted by a group of pro-BDS activists where he promoted the database and advocated for its use as a "living tool." During the May 2020 event, he also argued for the potential suspension of European Union-Israel trade agreements and other draconian financial sanctions. Such policies would not only economically harm Israelis but would have untold economic impacts on Palestinians.

Advocating economic measures that will damage both Israelis and Palestinians, precisely at a time when the world economy is on the verge of collapse, further reflects the need for the Council and its donors to reassess both the mandate and the staffing of this discriminatory Rapporteur position.
