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

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

Identical letters dated 29 December 2020 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 write to draw your urgent attention to the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to the escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. These unlawful and inhumane actions continue to cause widespread human suffering and to aggravate an already volatile situation.

In the midst of the holiday week and Christmas celebrations, Israeli warplanes launched an indiscriminate aggression on the Gaza Strip. For the second year in a row, the occupying Power has marred Christmas in Palestine through direct military attacks, targeting civilians, homes and even a children's hospital, causing civilian casualties and destruction to civilian structures and traumatizing yet again the Palestinian civilian population, besieged in Gaza for more than 13 years by Israel's immoral and illegal blockade that is the cause of grave humanitarian suffering. We condemn all of these illegal actions by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people.

Israel's attack on 26 December on the Mohammad al-Durra children's hospital and a rehabilitation centre for disabled persons caused extensive damage and spread fear among the children, their families and hospital staff, whose lives were threatened by such indiscriminate air strikes. The bombardment of civilian areas is prohibited by international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Several children, including a 6-year-old girl, were injured in the air strikes, and significant damage was caused to nearby homes and properties. Such breaches by the occupying Power demand urgent international action, first and foremost to save civilian lives and to deter further violations.

We reiterate our call for international protection for the Palestinian people, in line with the provisions of international humanitarian law, against Israel's cruel and repressive measures. Israel's shameless exploitation of the pandemic, which is wreaking havoc in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as elsewhere in the world, should not be met with silence. The occupying Power must be called out for its



violations and its deliberate exploitation of this time of pandemic to intensify its illegal practices and policies aimed at further entrenching its military occupation and inhumane blockade and undermining all Palestinian efforts to contain the virus and care for the civilian population.

The international community, including the Security Council, must demand that the occupying Power comply forthwith with its obligations under international law or bear the consequences for its unlawful behaviour. This must include, inter alia, respect for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Laws intended to protect children's rights cannot be so systematically and flippantly ignored without accountability.

As the list of Israeli crimes expands daily, we must ask: how many more Palestinian children will have to bear Israel's aggression and disregard for their lives until the law is upheld and given tangible meaning? Where is the outrage and action by those who are the custodians of the law, whether the Security Council, the General Assembly, the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, the States parties to the human rights covenants or all States Members of the United Nations as per their Charter obligations? We appeal to the international community to act, to uphold those obligations and to protect innocent civilian lives in Palestine, including those of the most vulnerable, the children.

Once again, we must also call attention to the havoc being caused by Israel's illegal ongoing settlement campaign in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, which continues to severely undermine the prospects for a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders as envisaged by international consensus. Last week, Israel advanced plans to "legalize" more illegal settlement outposts. The aim is clear: to expropriate more Palestinian land for expansion of its illegal settlements and advancement of its de facto annexation plans, which have never ceased, not for one minute.

Despite the claims of "suspension" of annexation plans that Israel uses to disguise itself as a trusted partner for regional peace, the reality is that it has never ceased its annexation practices, not even for a single minute, as proved in its constant destruction and expropriation of Palestinian homes and properties, forced transfer of Palestinian families and blatant settlement construction, with thousands upon thousands of settlement units advanced in this year alone.

We reiterate that, whether annexation is implemented partially or totally, de facto or de jure, it is illegal, and the international community must respond with serious, tangible action in respect of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the provisions of which are unequivocal in this regard.

In the absence of accountability, the reality being imposed on the ground is undeniable: Israel is creating an irreversible, coercive environment, in which Palestinian cities, towns and villages are disconnected and fragmented, destroying the contiguity of our territory and the geographical, social and economic viability of our State. At this very moment, Palestinians in Bethlehem and Jerusalem are witnessing their lands vanish into Israeli-declared "State lands" as the occupying Power aims to expand and merge the non-contiguous illegal settlements of "Givat Hamatos", "Gilo", "Har Gilo" and the so-called "E1" area. Enjoying the Israeli Government's direct support and continued international inaction, State-sponsored settler organizations are pushing to achieve a massive settlement bloc that will destroy the two-State solution.

Israel also persists with its repression and attacks against Palestinian civilians who dare to object to the occupation's illegal colonization of their land. On 25 December, Israeli occupation forces attacked Palestinian protesters in two separate

incidents in demonstrations against Israel's expropriation of Palestinian land near Beit Dajan, east of Nablus, and Dayr Jarir, north-east of Ramallah. One Palestinian protester was injured by an Israeli rubber-coated bullet and others suffered suffocation from tear gas and stun grenades fired at the civilian protesters. The mayor of Dayr Jarir, Ayman Alawi, was shot in the head by an Israeli rubber-coated bullet as he joined the citizens of the town in protesting against Israel's expropriation of the village's land for illegal settlement activities.

According to a report published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on 24 December, such illegal policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power, have only escalated in the recent period. In just the two-week period between 8 and 21 December, Israeli occupation forces killed 1 Palestinian, injured more than 70 others, detained over 150 Palestinians and demolished 22 Palestinian-owned structures. Since the Office began documenting the practice of home demolitions and forced evictions, 2020 has recorded the second-highest number of demolished Palestinian-owned structures and properties. Such breaches of international law have dispossessed hundreds of Palestinian families, affecting thousands of people. Even in the midst of a pandemic, the occupying Power has not hesitated to render hundreds more Palestinians homeless as it pursues its illegal colonization and annexation schemes.

In this regard, the Israeli occupying forces are routinely accompanied by extremist Israeli settlers and settler militias in their violent attacks against Palestinian civilians, destruction of property, forced evictions and displacement, expansion of illegal settlements, and acts of incitement and provocation, including at holy sites in Occupied East Jerusalem. Likewise, aided and abetted by the occupation forces, Israeli settler violence and terror have escalated in the recent period, with settlers attacking Palestinian civilians, razing large areas of Palestinian land and uprooting and burning trees across the occupied West Bank. While unconditional security is provided to settlers by the occupying forces, the Palestinian civilian population remains vulnerable owing to the occupation's starkly different treatment of Palestinians and settlers, with the latter enjoying rights and protection that the former are completely deprived of, as Israel imposes its racist, discriminatory, apartheid regime in Occupied Palestine, in grave breach of international law.

Without accountability, it is clear that such injustice and impunity will only continue to rise, causing more human suffering, diminishing hopes for a just solution and further impairing the viability of international law, which is being trampled before the world's eyes with no reaction. As we approach a new year, we urgently appeal to the international community to make this the year when the law is upheld and impunity is stopped. It is time for the international community to assume its responsibilities towards this unlawful situation in Palestine. International law, including the relevant United Nations resolutions, must be upheld and when it is breached, consequences must follow. Only implementation and accountability can reverse these negative and destructive trends and salvage the possibility of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution by which the Palestinian and Israeli peoples can live in mutual peace and security. There is no other way.

This letter is in follow-up to our 699 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 15 December 2020 (A/ES-10/845-S/2020/1208), 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 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
