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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 7 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

Despite our repeated appeals for international action to deter Israel from its criminal behaviour towards the Palestinian people, the lack of serious efforts to hold the occupying Power accountable and ensure protection to the Palestinian people, as prescribed by international humanitarian law, has left our people even more vulnerable to the brutality of this occupation.

The failure to impose consequences that would reign in Israel's unlawful actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has propelled a vicious culture of impunity by which this colonial occupation has only become more entrenched, more destructive and more violent over time, with home demolitions, land appropriation, settler violence and terror, extrajudicial killings, mass arrests and de facto annexation unabated and escalating.

Such impunity, including direct attacks against civilians, including children, have become more frequent and shockingly normalized by the occupation, even more so during the pandemic. Today, four Palestinian men were shot and injured during an Israeli military raid of the Qalandiya refugee camp, three of them reported to be in critical condition. On 25 November, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Noor Jamal Shuqeir, 38 years of age, at a checkpoint in East Jerusalem, claiming that Mr. Shuqeir was involved in an attack. However, as details emerged, Israeli authorities revised their claim, stating that it remained unclear whether Mr. Shuqeir intended to carry out an attack. According to footage released by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, Mr. Shuqeir was running away from an ambushing group of Israeli soldiers before being fatally shot. Such extrajudicial killings have become a systematic practice of the occupation, amounting to war crimes against the occupied civilian population.

In this regard, on 4 December, a 14-year-old boy, Ali Abu Alia, was shot and killed by Israeli occupying forces in Mughayyir village, near Ramallah. Ali is the fifth Palestinian child to be killed by Israeli live ammunition this year. Ali was among community members protesting Israel's colonization policies in and around the



village. There is absolutely no justification for such use of force against civilians, and certainly not children.

The Palestinian people are compelled to ask: how many more Palestinian children will be robbed of their lives until Israel abides by international law? This heinous murder should remind the international community that children are protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other provisions of international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, paradoxically, Palestinian children continue to be routinely killed and maimed by the occupying forces, while the perpetrators are routinely shielded from responsibility. We call upon the international community to act to bring an end to the occupation's State-sponsored killing of Palestinian children, for which Israel must be fully held accountable.

As the international community remains overwhelmed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic impact, Israel's intention to exploit these extraordinary circumstances is glaring. Rather than respecting the law and acting in solidarity with the international community at a time of global crisis, Israel is instead challenging every international norm and the international consensus on a just solution, bringing both to a breaking point. The fact is that, lack of action making such rogue behaviour consequential, Israel's policy of "displace and replace" has only intensified. Such systematic ethnic cleansing and colonization constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity and must be countered by the international community in both word and deed.

The proliferation of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in particular in areas in and around Occupied East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibition on transferring civilian population into occupied territory, is deeply rooted in Israel's overall annexation schemes. The so-called "suspension" of such plans should therefore be neither cause for relief nor applause by the international community, as more Palestinian land is actually being devoured daily as Israel lays the groundwork for de jure annexation.

We reiterate that, whether annexation is implemented partially or totally, gradually or in one fell swoop, de facto or de jure, it is illegal and requires that the international community take serious, tangible action, in accordance with the clear obligations stipulated in international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

In this regard, it must be noted that, in the last month, there has been an alarming spike in Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes and forced eviction of families, deliberately rendering hundreds more civilians homeless in the midst of a raging pandemic. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israel has demolished more than 500 Palestinian homes and structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the start of 2020, with East Jerusalem a prime target. These decades-old policies, coupled with settler violence and impunity, are aimed at achieving demographic and territorial control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, by driving the Palestinian people off their land, ensuring Israel's control of the territory with as minimal Palestinian demography as possible.

The extensive territorial fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is reflected in the growing presence of illegal Israeli settlements and settlers. As Israel continues to cut off, isolate and wall in Palestinian villages, towns and cities, the threat of settler violence and terror has simultaneously increased in every aspect of Palestinian daily life. On 4 December, an extremist Israeli settler attempted to burn down the Gethsemane Church in Occupied East Jerusalem in this holy season for the Christian faithful. Fortunately, the attack, which burned several pews in the church, was thwarted by local Palestinian citizens who handed the perpetrator over to Israeli authorities, who would later shockingly claim that the attack by a Jewish extremist against the church was somehow not motivated by ideological beliefs.

Over the past years, Israeli settlers have carried out several heinous attacks against Christian and Muslim sites, as well as priests and other religious officials, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Such behaviour has undoubtedly been fuelled by Israel's constant illegal measures, including its dangerous excavations and provocations in connection with holy sites, including its demolition last week of the stairway leading to the historic Yusufia cemetery in Occupied East Jerusalem. The aim has clearly been to undermine the Palestinian people's connection to their land and holy sites, including to Haram al-Sharif, the legal and historic status quo of which Israel continues to repeatedly violate, threatening to ignite a full-blown religious conflict.

Urgent action is required to prevent the proliferation of such provocative and hateful attacks. There must be accountability, which is a rare occurrence as Israeli settlers and fanatics, the direct beneficiaries of the two-tiered system in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, operate in a State-sponsored environment of impunity. We condemn this attack on the ancient Gethsemane Church and call upon the international community to condemn all such provocations and incitement and all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as reaffirmed in resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

It is high time for the international community to stand by its commitments and obligations to address these ongoing crimes. We call on the international community, including the Security Council, to use all means available to it to uphold international law and implement United Nations resolutions and to demonstrate to the Palestinian people that they are not alone in the struggle for their inalienable rights and self-determination, as prominently enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

One thing that Israel, the occupying Power, fails to see is that, although it enjoys the inaction of the international system, it is rapidly losing its credibility in the eyes of the people of conscience of the world, for whom resolving this grave injustice remains a matter of urgency and priority. We appeal once more for collective action, based on the long-standing international consensus enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolution, to bring a halt to these crimes against the Palestinian people by holding Israel accountable for its illegal 53-year-long occupation. This must include, inter alia, firm respect of the obligations of non-recognition, non-assistance and non-complicity with its illegal settlement colonization enterprise in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Only accountability can remedy this grave situation and also finally prove opportune that international law applies to all without exception, including to the question of Palestine.

This letter is in follow-up to our 697 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 17 November 2020 ([A/ES-10/843-S/2020/1121](#)), constitute a basic record of the crimes 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 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