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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 5 January 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

In the light of recent developments, I am compelled to once again draw your attention to the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, due to the ongoing and escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power.

For the Palestinian people, this new year, as every year, has begun with grave violations of international law and human rights abuses perpetrated by the occupying Power as it ruthlessly entrenches its control over Palestinian land and Palestinian lives through brutal and exploitative measures, including in this time of heightened vulnerability caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Today, Israeli forces shot and killed another young Palestinian man, 'Ahed Ikhilil, age 25, from the town of Bayt Ummar in the Occupied West Bank. This killing was preceded on 2 January by the shooting of Haron Abu Aram, age 24, at close range by Israeli occupation forces in Masafer Yatta. This young man is now permanently disabled, paralysed from the neck down, making him the latest victim of Israeli impunity. In an attempt to justify the attack, Israeli occupation authorities claim the incident turned violent. However, video footage proves otherwise, as Abu Aram posed no threat and lay motionless on the ground after being attacked for trying to defend his land and his property, including a generator for his family's home, which the Israeli soldiers were trying to confiscate.

Like many Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, Abu Aram was in the process of rebuilding his family's home, which had recently been demolished under the pretext of construction without a permit. Yet, as highlighted repeatedly by the Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, Israel, violating its Fourth Geneva Convention obligations, makes it nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain such permits, as it aims to deliberately restrict Palestinian development and dispossess Palestinian families, creating a coercive environment impairing their well-being and livelihoods and forcing them to leave their land.



For all of these systematic abuses and violations, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. The absence of accountability has clearly only emboldened such illegal behaviour, with near-daily demolition orders issued and threats made against Palestinian families. In fact, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the year 2020 witnessed the highest number of demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures by the Israeli occupation forces since the documentation of this practice began and all indications are that Israel is set to continue this illegal, destructive practice if not deterred.

In 2020, exploiting the international community's inaction, Israel also continued its violent arrest and detention campaign in Occupied Palestine. In the course of just one year, the Israeli occupying forces detained 4,636 Palestinians, including 543 minors under the age of 18 and 128 women. Israel has also persisted with its policy of administrative detention; the most arbitrary form of detention by the Israeli military holds Palestinians indefinitely without charge or trial, often tortured and subjected to other forms of ill-treatment and human rights violations. A total of 380 Palestinians are currently being administratively detained by Israel without charge, among them children and women.

Governments, human rights groups and other international organizations have called for the release of these Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons without being charged, tried or convicted. As expected, such calls are blatantly ignored by Israel, adding more to the massive record of documented violations perpetrated daily against the Palestinian people under its 53-year belligerent occupation.

Massive arrest campaigns and raids by the occupying Power are daily occurrences throughout Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, with utter disregard for the state of emergency in the West Bank due to the pandemic. In just one example, while conducting campaigns and raids on New Year's Eve, on 31 December, Israeli occupation forces violently stormed homes and damaged properties, and arrested 16 Palestinians, including 4 minors.

Hundreds of Palestinians being held captive in Israeli prisons also suffer from critical illnesses, among them many who are chronically ill. It is known that at least 10 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including 81-year-old Fouad Shoubaki, the oldest prisoner, have cancer and are in need of special medical treatment. From Israel's medical negligence of prisoners to the inhumane practice of necroviolence by which the occupying Power withholds the bodies of Palestinians it has murdered, international law obligations continue to be trampled upon and the Palestinian people pay the ultimate price for such impunity and lack of accountability, deprived of their most basic human rights and fundamental human dignity.

We appeal to the international community to address Israel's collective violence and dehumanizing practices against the living and deceased, in order to ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, by the occupying Power. Legal obligations are just that – obligatory, without exception – and cannot be disregarded and violated without consequence.

In this regard, it is no coincidence that Israel has begun the new year with plans to seize more Palestinian land and expand its illegal settlements. Undeterred as the international community once again failed in the past year to follow up its demands for a cessation of Israel's colonization and annexation schemes with action, the occupying Power continues apace with such illegal measures. In fact, it seems to even be encouraged to do so as international partners fawn over recent agreements signed between Israel and Arab States while ignoring the reality of what is being perpetrated on the ground in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, on a daily basis. That

reality exposes Israel's colonial agenda as clearly as ever: more Palestinian land without the people.

On 3 January, Israeli occupation authorities approved plans to seize more large tracts of Palestinian land in the Bethlehem area to facilitate the expansion of its illegal settlement network while further fragmenting Palestinian cities, towns and villages. These plans are part and parcel of Israel's plans to consolidate a ring of illegal settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, causing irreversible damage to the contiguity of the State of Palestine and the viability of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

Clearing the area of Palestinian civilians and properties before seizure of the land continues to be the usual Israeli practice as it systematically and gradually swallows up the Palestinian land, dunum by dunum. More Palestinian homes, as well as internationally funded humanitarian structures, have thus continued to be demolished, exacerbating the already severe crisis caused by the pandemic. In just one recent incident, on 29 December, Israeli occupation forces demolished Palestinian homes and structures in Yatta, south of Al-Khalil (Hebron), and Nuway'imah, south of Jericho. The following day, Israeli occupation forces uprooted dozens of olive trees and razed large tracts of privately-owned land in the village of Jaba', near Bethlehem.

Extremist Israeli settlers have continued their violent rampages, also uprooting and burning trees and agricultural crops, destroying the livelihoods of more Palestinian families, who continue to live under their constant threats and harassment, and vulnerable to their violence. At the same time, extremist and fanatic Israeli settlers continue their dangerous incitement and attacks on holy sites, particularly the Aqsa Mosque at Haram Al-Sharif.

The international community must explicitly demand once again that Israel immediately cease all of its illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Settlement activities constitute a flagrant violation of international law amounting to grave breaches, i.e. war crimes. Israel must be demanded to abide by its legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, as reaffirmed in Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), or suffer the consequences of its rogue behaviour. All perpetrators of crimes against the Palestinian people, whether Israeli government or military officials or settlers illegally transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, must be held accountable to the full extent of the law, including international criminal law as codified in the Rome Statute.

In the absence of accountability, Israel's over-53-year occupation is becoming more entrenched by the minute. Those familiar with Israel's conduct know that a new year will not change its illegal behaviour. As long as impunity is coupled with the lack of accountability, Israel will remain shielded while international law, including legislation by the Security Council, is trampled upon and undermined. The negative, dangerous and dark trends created by this illegal occupation can only be reversed through accountability that upholds international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The time for mandated action is more indispensable than ever; it is the only hope to reverse course and salvage the prospects for a solution that ensures that justice, freedom, equality, dignity and peace prevail. The implementation of Security Council resolutions and the applicability of international law will depend on whether the Council seizes the opportunity to put an end to Israel's crimes and violations, insisting on upholding the Charter without exception and fulfilling its responsibilities to confront injustice wherever it may occur.

This letter is in follow-up to our 700 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 29 December 2020 ([A/ES-10/846-S/2020/1306](#)) 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
