



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General
5 March 2021

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5

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

Security Council
Seventy-sixth year

Identical letters dated 5 March 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

As the situation in Occupied Palestine continues to deteriorate and Israel continues to entrench its illegal occupation, we are compelled, week after week, to draw international attention to the human rights abuses and crimes against the Palestinian people and to appeal for action to halt these violations, which are causing daily trauma to Palestinian families and shredding the prospects for a peaceful solution.

The occupation's impact on the safety, well-being and mental health of children has been especially distressing as children's rights are gravely violated without consequence and children are left without protection. Faced with imminent danger, any parent's impulse is naturally to protect his or her child. However, life under colonial occupation strips parents of the right and ability to protect their children from Israeli military raids, violent home invasions and arrest and detention by the occupying army, for fear of even greater reprisals and punishment against their family, including the use of lethal force and the destruction of property.

These violations are not just arbitrary incidents, but rather part of a systematic pattern of policies designed to control the population through violence, repression and fear. A report by three Israeli non-governmental organizations – Breaking the Silence, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel and Yesh Din – reveals how such inhumane policies are integral to the occupation's entrenchment. The report, entitled *A Life Exposed: Military Invasions of Palestinian Homes in the West Bank*, reflects extensive testimonies and interviews, including with former Israeli soldiers who took part in military raids and home invasions. Even just one reflection, similar to those described in the report, conveys the chilling and disturbing impact of this daily practice:

Their children are gathered in a room, afraid, trying to understand why they were suddenly yanked out of bed by masked soldiers who are now standing in the middle of their living room, photographing them, opening their drawers,



speaking to them in broken Arabic. When the soldiers leave the house, they leave behind much more than a mess in the living room. The Palestinian family is left with trauma: with fear of what the next night will bring, children who wet their beds, and a feeling of being unsafe in their own home, of a loss of control. Every such invasion shatters the most basic premise of being a parent – the knowledge that they can protect their children.

Insecurity to Palestinian children is also caused by other systematic violations, including home demolitions, settler violence and terror, and attacks on schools. On 2 March, independent United Nations Special Rapporteurs condemned Israel's repeated demolition of Humsa Al Bqai'a, stressing that "the ongoing destruction by the Israeli military of the homes, and the destruction and seizure of property, including humanitarian assistance, in Humsa Al Bqai'a has been causing great hardship to the approximately 60 villagers, including 35 children." According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in just the first seven weeks of 2021, Israel's policy of home demolitions has resulted in the destruction, seizure or forced self-demolition of nearly 227 Palestinian-owned structures, including 93 donor-funded ones, and the displacement of 367 Palestinians, including some 200 children. Moreover, at least 53 schools are under threat of demolition. As with many Palestinian villages, Israel attempts to justify destruction of Humsa Al Bqai'a and other areas based on empty pretexts, all aimed to seize the land and entrench the occupation. Israel indiscriminately designates Palestinian villages as "military firing zones", allowing soldiers to forcibly uproot Palestinians and destroy their homes, which are only to be replaced by settlements and segregated settler-only roads, further cementing the apartheid nature of this colonial occupation in grave breach of the law. As stressed by the Special Rapporteurs, the occupying Power has strict obligations under international law and "cannot use the territory under occupation to conduct military training operations without ample justification. We note that Israel has plentiful grounds for military training within its own borders."

The trajectory of demolitions indicates that such policies will only intensify as Israel seeks to further clear Palestinian land of its inhabitants for seizure, to facilitate its ongoing illegal settlement expansion. While Israel claims that it has "suspended" annexation plans, de facto annexation continues unabated and with the full knowledge of the international community, and yet without consequence.

In addition to Humsa Al Bqai'a, other recent examples include the demolition on 28 February of a Palestinian home for the fourth time in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Isawiyah. The homeowner, Hatim Hussein Abu Rayala, suffers from paraplegia paralysis caused by a previous demolition of his home. On 2 March, occupation forces carried out multiple demolitions, demolishing a home in Battir, near Bethlehem, and three homes in Masafer Yatta, near Al-Khalil (Hebron). Then, on 3 March, occupying forces demolished the two-storey home of the Abu Mayala family in the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem, claiming that it was built without a license, which is nearly impossible to obtain from the occupying authorities.

Despite legal prohibitions and repeated Security Council and General Assembly demands for the cessation of such actions, Israel has pursued demolitions and forced displacement as key policies since the occupation began in 1967, relying on such violations to advance its colonization and annexation plans. This has become blatantly clear to the international community, and yet again there have been no consequences.

In this regard, we draw attention to a letter, sent on 28 February and signed by 442 European parliamentarians, cautioning against Israel's de facto annexation plans. The parliamentarians stress that, despite the claim that Israel has suspended annexation, "developments on the ground clearly point to a reality of rapidly progressing de facto annexation, especially through accelerated settlement expansion

and demolitions of Palestinian structures”. We reiterate here our call for the Security Council to uphold its own resolutions and its very credibility by demanding an immediate end to such violations. Resolution 2334 (2016), which directly addressed these grave violations, must be implemented without exception.

In the absence of accountability, the occupation’s illegal behaviour has only emboldened settler violence, with attacks on Palestinian civilians and properties surging in recent months. Protected by the Israeli military, settlers have enjoyed decades of impunity at the expense of Palestinian suffering. Just this week, Israeli settlers from the so-called “Ahiya” outpost attacked homes and vehicles in Jalud, south of Nablus. Settlers regularly attack the town, while Israeli soldiers either stand by watching or join in the attacks. Also, on 26 February, occupying forces surrounded Kifil Haris, near Salfit, blocking entry and exit points to the town to escort a religious march of extremist settlers. The town’s shrines were desecrated, homes attacked, and roads vandalized in the aftermath.

On 2 March, the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land condemned repeated Israeli settler attacks against the Romanian Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem. The monastery was attacked in February by an Israeli settler; this was followed by another settler attack this week, in which the church’s entrance was set on fire. The Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land urged that “All political and religious authorities of the City should unite in condemning these acts so frequent in these last months in Jerusalem. For that reason, we demand the Israeli security authorities investigate these incidents seriously and bring assailants to justice.”

Israel also persists with its crushing of Palestinian protests and the arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, including children. In the past week, Israeli occupation forces attacked several peaceful anti-settlement rallies across Occupied Palestine, in Dayr Jarir, near Ramallah, in Kafr Qaddum, near Qalqilyah, and elsewhere, using excessive and lethal force against unarmed civilians, injuring dozens. In the Kafr Qaddum protest, occupation forces shot a 10-year-old child in the chest with a rubber bullet.

In the past week, night raids were also repeatedly carried out by the Israeli occupying forces, resulting in the detention of 20 Palestinians on 1 March, and 22 Palestinians, on 2 March alone. Among those arrested were children and young people, aged between 14 and 20. Following this systematic pattern, hundreds of Palestinians, including women and children, risk being arrested in the coming weeks, as Israel persists with its violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and total disregard for the pandemic state of emergency and the well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation.

In this regard, we must also highlight the case of Palestinian parliamentarian Khalida Jarrar, who has been held in Israeli administrative detention without trial or charges since her arbitrary arrest in October 2019. This week, an Israeli military court sentenced Ms. Jarrar to two years in prison, making her the eighth elected Palestinian parliamentarian currently held in Israeli captivity.

Throughout 2020, the international community has seen the dangerous effects and consequences of this prolonged occupation and the relentless Israeli campaign in violation of international law and of the global consensus regarding a just solution for the Palestine question. Despite Israel’s attempts to disguise itself as a peace-seeking occupier, its nearly 54-year military occupation and flagrant colonization and annexation drive stand in total contradiction. As Israel invokes claims of antisemitism and one-sided bias to silence the criticism of its occupation, it fails to question how it has gotten away with so much impunity.

The answer is because of a lack of collective will to ensure accountability. Since the founding of the United Nations, the international community has focused tremendous energy and resources on the question of Palestine, only to deliver statements, with no credible measures towards actually ending Israel's systemic impunity and justly resolving the conflict. This has only emboldened Israel, permitting it to entrench its occupation and cause irreversible damage to the two-State solution, while evading accountability for its violations and crimes.

The responsibilities of the international community, including the Security Council, are clear. Decades of inaction have made the Palestine question a litmus test of the international community's legal and moral obligations. As the Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk, has stated: "A deep-rooted problem at the heart of this conflict has not been the clarity of international law ... but the unwillingness of the international community to enforce what it has proclaimed." This makes ever more important the decision announced on 3 March by the International Criminal Court prosecutor to initiate an investigation in respect of the situation in Palestine. It is time to bring a halt to impunity and to seek justice for the many victims of this illegal occupation.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 706 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 25 February 2021 ([A/ES-10/852-S/2021/191](#)) 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