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

Security Council
Seventy-eighth year

Identical letters dated 17 April 2023 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

This day marks Palestinian Prisoners' Day, the annual observance by the Palestinian people of the suffering and sacrifices of the many Palestinians who have been imprisoned by Israel, the occupying Power, across almost 56 years of its belligerent military occupation of the Palestinian territory since 1967. Over the past five decades, Israel has detained more than 800,000 Palestinians and not a single day passes without the arrest and detention of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli occupying forces.

As of today, nearly 5,000 Palestinians, including 31 women and 170 children, are being arbitrarily and illegally imprisoned in Israeli jails and detention centres and subjected to the most inhumane treatment, including violent interrogations, administrative detention, physical and psychological maltreatment, solitary confinement, unhygienic conditions, medical negligence, collective punishment and torture. Moreover, the Israeli judicial system, as part of this colonial regime, has acted in a manner that has facilitated and legitimated the incarceration of, discrimination against and persecution of the Palestinian people. Israel even boasts of the only juvenile military court system in the world, through which it has tried and convicted thousands of Palestinian children across the years.

We call urgent attention to the plight of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including those on hunger strike and those suffering illness, and call on the international community, in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to uphold their responsibilities to ensure respect by Israel, the occupying Power, of its obligations in this regard. We reiterate our standing calls for the release of all Palestinians being held captive by the Israeli occupation.

Israel also persists in repression of Palestinian worshippers and violation of freedom of religion and the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. Yet again, Israel disrupted and marred the peaceful observance of the Easter holiday in Occupied Palestine. Israeli soldiers beat Palestinian worshippers and other



Christian faithful as they tried to access the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in occupied East Jerusalem to celebrate the Holy Fire/Saturday of Light services.

Israel also cancelled permits that had been granted to 700 Palestinian Christians from Gaza to attend Easter services in Jerusalem and imposed restrictions on access, deemed “unreasonable and unprecedented” by Church leaders. In this regard, leaders from various Christian denominations have warned of the increasing attacks on churches, assaults and harassment of Christians by Israeli settlers and increasing restrictions on worship.

In addition to recent attacks involving vandalization and damage to church property and Christian cemeteries, video recordings have shown Jewish settlers spitting and cursing at Christian nuns and worshippers and assaulting clergy. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Theophilos III, has warned of “unprecedented attacks on the Christian presence by radical Israeli groups”. Moreover, according to the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the settlers have been emboldened by the extremist, right-wing Israeli government, and he stressed that “these people feel they are protected ... that the cultural and political atmosphere now can justify, or tolerate, actions against Christians”.

The intensification of such assaults, along with continual harassment and attacks on Muslim worshippers at the Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif, are dangerously stoking religious tensions. The rising aggressions against and repression of Palestinian Muslims and Christians in the City further expose Israel’s agenda to Judaize the City, to the exclusion of other faiths, as it persists with illegal attempts to alter the demography, character and status of occupied East Jerusalem and to forcibly impose its sovereignty on the City it is illegally occupying and has illegally annexed.

At the centre of such illegal Israeli actions remain the constant attempts to ethnically cleanse and forcibly transfer Palestinians from the City. This is being implemented through property confiscation, home demolitions, revocation of residency and relentless coercion and harassment, especially by extremist settler groups with the support of extremist Israeli politicians, some now ministers in the government. Thousands of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem live in fear of forced dispossession and displacement as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with such illegal policies and practices, with at least 150 families in the Old City and the neighbourhoods of Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah alone at impending risk of expulsion from their homes by occupation authorities and settler organizations.

In a statement on 13 April, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons stressed, inter alia, that “Palestinians under Israeli occupation continue to be forced out of their homes and dispossessed of their land and properties on the basis of discriminatory laws” and that such practices, along with Israel’s transfer of its own population into the occupied territory, confirm “a deliberate intention to colonize the territory it occupies – a practice strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law. It amounts to a *prima facie* war crime”.

Israel’s colonial agenda has been fully exposed by the extremists in its government. This reality can no longer be denied or ignored by those who have for too long excused and abetted Israel’s illegal behaviour, failing to hold it accountable for its grave breaches. Following Knesset legislation authorizing Israeli settlers to resume the colonization of areas in the northern occupied West Bank, seven government ministers led hundreds of extremist Jewish settlers in a march on 10 April on Jabal Sbeih in the town of Beita, south-east of Nablus, declaring their intent to strengthen the settlement movement and demanding the revival of the illegal outpost of “Evyatar”. At the march, Israeli Minister Bezalel Smotrich boasted: “With God’s

help, we will bring another half a million Jews here in addition to the half million who are already here”.

Emboldened by such official policy, settlers have continued to raid Palestinian towns and villages, intimidating and attacking Palestinian civilians, including children, and destroying Palestinian property, including the stoning and torching of homes and vehicles, hate graffiti and the destruction of agricultural crops and orchards. All of this is being done with the support of the Israeli occupying forces, a systematic, tandem process aimed at forcibly dispossessing and displacing Palestinians and facilitating Israel's takeover of land and resources, as it has continually pursued for 75 years since the Nakba.

The international community must firmly oppose all such Israeli violations. Israel must be demanded to halt its attacks on Palestinian civilians, including worshippers, halt its military raids, including on our holy sites, and halt settler violence and terrorism against our people and all other colonial activities and apartheid policies. It must be demanded to respect its obligations as the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, where it is not the sovereign and has no sovereignty rights whatsoever, and where the presence of its occupying military forces and settlers is illegal and absolutely rejected by the Palestinian people, the indigenous people of the land.

We reiterate our calls on the Security Council and all States to act urgently to protect the Palestinian people in the face of this ongoing aggression and to undertake effective and meaningful accountability measures to bring pressure to bear to bring an end to this illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime and ensure the realization by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and all of their other inalienable human rights.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 785 letters regarding the ongoing historic injustice against the Palestinian people and the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, 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 7 April 2023 ([A/ES-10/933-S/2023/254](#)) 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 must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed 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