



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General
15 November 2023

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-eighth year

Identical letters dated 15 November 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

Despite our repeated calls for international action to stop the criminal Israeli aggression on the Palestinian civilian population and all civilian objects in the Gaza Strip, including attacks on hospitals and shelters for the displaced, we witnessed today a horrific attack by Israeli occupying forces on Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest medical complex, in grave breach of international humanitarian law.

Violating all norms, Israeli soldiers violently attacked Shifa, terrorizing the thousands of civilians who had sheltered there alongside patients and medical staff. Israeli soldiers raided the hospital premises, ransacking rooms and destroying equipment, beating medical staff and forcing them to leave their patients and duty stations to be interrogated at gunpoint, and chasing patients, staff and displaced civilians out of the hospital, expelling them outside to the dangers of Israeli snipers, bombs and drones firing non-stop at them.

We remind that health workers, humanitarians, patients and civilians who may be sheltering at hospitals are protected persons under international law. They cannot be stripped of this protection under the law. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, has stressed, "The protection of newborns, patients, medical staff and all civilians must override all other concerns", and the Director General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has reiterated calls for protecting hospitals, health workers and patients, demanding that "international humanitarian law must be respected". Both have underscored that "hospitals are not battlegrounds".

That this obvious fact – fundamental to the rules of international law and any standard of human decency and morality – has to be stated in 2023 is a reflection of the depths of inhumanity our world has reached.

This attack constitutes another war crime committed by Israel, the occupying Power, and yet, it continues to be treated as a State above the law, evading any



accountability for its endless list of crimes against the Palestinian people. Apparently, no crime, no matter how grave – from ethnic cleansing to colonization to apartheid to genocide – is enough for the international community, including the Security Council, to say to Israel: stop.

Who in this world would accept such horrors for their people – a life without security, without food and water, without homes, without medicine and health care, without fuel for basic functions of any society, a life without rights and without freedom, only a life of violence, oppression and deprivation? How can anyone continue to defend the barbaric actions of this illegal, colonial apartheid regime?

Regrettably, the fact that Israel remains shielded from consequences for its crimes and permitted to carry on with this aggression has only led to more casualties and more human misery. As of 14 November, while noting the difficulty of accounting for all casualties due to the mayhem caused by Israeli attacks, reports are that the Palestinian death toll has reached 11,423 Palestinians, the vast majority in the Gaza Strip and nearly 200 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and over 30,000 have been injured. Again, this toll does not account for the nearly 3,000 who remain trapped under the rubble and whose chances for survival are grim.

We repeat: nowhere is safe in Gaza. Israeli soldiers are now harassing, seizing and detaining Palestinian civilians fleeing south. There are reports of Israeli soldiers beating and stripping civilians and perpetrating other acts of violence and dehumanization against them. Moreover, Israel is spreading leaflets across areas of southern Gaza demanding that families evacuate their residences or face imminent danger, belying claims that evacuating our civilians from the north would keep them safe, instead continuing its onslaught on all parts of Gaza, threatening more civilian casualties and further massive displacement and destitution of our people, stripping them of their homes and everything in their lives, material or human, even their dignity, destroying the entirety of their society and corralling them into shelters that are unsafe from harm and becoming humanly unliveable.

We must thus raise the alarm again about Israel's illegal and cynical plans to forcibly transfer the Palestinian civilian population from the Gaza Strip. It is not stopping at the forcible displacement of over 1.6 million people in Gaza, it is pushing them farther and farther south until it can push them out of Gaza. The international community must act without delay to stop these war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Security Council cannot remain paralysed in the face of these crimes. States must act, individually and collectively, to stop this barbaric and catastrophic aggression on a defenceless, occupied people.

On this World Children's Day, we reiterate our calls for the protection of Palestinian children who are suffering hell on Earth in Gaza and calls for protection of the Palestinian people from this criminal aggressor.

Calls for restraint are clearly not working; Israel does not care one bit about what the international community says. The demands for respect of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, must be backed by immediate, serious, collective efforts to enforce the law.

As stated by Médecins sans frontières, a front-line witness to this calamity: "The horrors unfolding before our eyes in Gaza show that calls for restraint and adherence to international humanitarian law have gone unheeded. Working purposefully to reach a ceasefire is the most effective way to ensure the protection of civilians."

We reiterate our calls for an immediate ceasefire, a halt to the forced transfer, the protection of our civilians, and unimpeded emergency humanitarian assistance to them. Millions of lives are at stake. The credibility of the international system and its universal code of laws is on the line, not only in Palestine, but the world over.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 814 letters on 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 13 November 2023 (A/ES-10/968-S/2023/864) 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 against our 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 distributed as an official document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Riyadh **Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer
