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### Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

## **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **The Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem**

### **Introduction**

Israel continues to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Palestinian people without any form of accountability. During the recent violent events that erupted in May 2021, Israel targeted Palestinian civilians, including children and women. Since it is not possible for Maat to submit a comprehensive review of all human rights issues that are basically violated by the Israeli occupation authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Human Rights Council at its 48th session, Maat wishes to bring to light the most critical issues, including the situation in Sheikh Jarrah and the policies of forced displacement, in addition to the most recent escalation in violence that resulted in gross violations of the basic rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to life, liberty and security of person, not to mention the violations of the right to movement and health as Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza has entered its 14 year.

### **Human rights violations related to the escalation of violence in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood**

In May 2021, tensions escalated in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods located in East Jerusalem, against the backdrop of the imminent forced displacement measures that aimed at evacuating 12 Palestinian families from their homes in favor of Israeli settlers, as an Israeli court issued a decision on October 2020 to forcibly evacuate twelve Palestinian families living in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem, along with the transfer of ownership of their homes to Israeli settlers. Besides, the court ruled that each family that was ordered to evacuate must pay \$20,000 to cover the legal fees paid by the settlers during the trial, which caused intense tensions between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem, and at the same time led to a sharp deterioration in the basic human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories over a two-week period until it reached the highest levels of violence and human and material losses in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

In conjunction with the tensions broke out in wake of the forced eviction procedures in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, and during the last days of Ramadan, the Israeli security forces obstructed the access of Palestinian worshipers to the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and used excessive force inside the mosque itself, which has escalated tensions among the Palestinians protesting against these intransigent Israeli policies and the Israeli occupation authorities. This escalation exacerbated the military intervention between the Israeli occupation forces and armed groups in Gaza on May 10. The military operations led by the Israeli occupation authorities, by air and sea, against armed groups and unarmed civilians in Gaza led to widespread violations of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to life, liberty and security of person. The indiscriminate attacks carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against civilian targets and objects such as homes, residential buildings, government headquarters and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, have amounted to more than 1,450 raids and air attacks between May 10-20, 2021, killing 256 Palestinians, including 66 children and 40 women, wounding 6,800 others, and displacing more than 74,000 Palestinians.<sup>2</sup>

The indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks carried out by the Israeli occupation forces that targeted civilian objects in the Gaza Strip have also resulted in severe damage to government buildings, homes and residential buildings, international humanitarian

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Human Rights Council Forty seventh session, 9 July 2021 link: [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session47/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_47\\_57\\_Ad](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session47/Documents/A_HRC_47_57_Ad).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

organizations, medical facilities, media offices, and roads linking civilians to basic services such as hospitals. This has had a very serious impact on the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, especially on water, sanitation and electricity. In this context, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has estimated that, as a result of these indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, 400,000 people do not have access to safe piped water. In addition, 58 educational facilities were severely damaged, 1165 residential and commercial units were completely destroyed, 9 hospitals and 19 clinics were partially damaged. The ten-day indiscriminate Israeli attacks led to severe damage to many civilian infrastructure, as 18 water pumps, and 18,734 meters of sewage networks were destroyed in the recent Israeli bombing.<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of the escalating tensions between the Israeli occupation forces and Palestinian protesters in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during May, the arbitrary arrests of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli occupation forces increased. In this context, it should be noted that more than 1,500 Palestinians were illegally arrested by the Israeli occupation forces on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, which is a flagrant violation of the right of Palestinian civilians to freedom and personal safety.<sup>4</sup>

### **Violations of the right to movement and health in light of the ongoing Israeli blockade on Gaza**

For the 14th consecutive year, Israel continued its illegal air, land and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip, restricting the movement of people and goods in and out of the area, which continued to have a devastating impact on the human rights of Gaza's 2 million inhabitants. Israel stopped the entry of construction materials and fuel into Gaza repeatedly. This shut down the only power plant in Gaza, leading to a further reduction in the supply of electricity, which had already been available for only about four hours a day. Israel also imposed a full maritime closure and repeatedly limited entry of goods to food and medicine only. The measures amounted to collective punishment at a time of increasing COVID-19 infections in Gaza, which further exacerbated the suffering of the civilian population in the Strip.<sup>5</sup>

With the surge in recent violence in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation authorities have tightened their control over freedom of movement outside the Gaza Strip through their 14-year-old blockade, and within the West Bank through checkpoints and barriers spread in every area, which has impeded Palestinians' access to health care and put vulnerable populations at greater risk in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, and in this context, people who were in need of urgent medical care outside Gaza were reportedly not allowed to leave between 11 May and 3 June 2021 in the midst of an escalation of armed violence between the occupying forces and the Palestinian factions following the closure of Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shaloum) and Erez crossing points by the Israeli occupation authorities.<sup>6</sup>

### **Recommendations**

In conclusion, the Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights believes that the recent escalation of violence by the Israeli occupation forces, which is the fourth escalation of its kind, will continue for many future cycles if its root causes are not addressed. These recent events have made abundantly clear that the ongoing discrimination against Palestinians across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and threats of forced displacement, forced displacement, demolitions, settlement expansion, settler violence, and the 14-year

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, Human Rights Council, Forty-seventh session, 21 June–9 July 2021, link: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/NGO/210>.

<sup>5</sup> Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2020, Amnesty International, March 2021, link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/report-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/>.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Ibid.

blockade of Gaza—to name a few— All of them have contributed and will continue to contribute to more cycles of violence over the coming years. In this context, Maat Foundation presents its recommendations to the international community with its governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to ensure the promotion and protection of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories as follows:

- The necessity of forming international investigation committees of a permanent and continuous nature in the occupied Palestinian territories to conduct periodic investigations into all allegations of grave human rights violations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- The need to ensure full accountability of the Israeli political, administrative and military officials responsible for the serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territories and to bring them to the International Criminal Court.
- The necessity of establishing UN offices and bodies in the occupied Palestinian territories to monitor the massive human rights violations carried out by the Israeli occupation forces towards Palestinian civilians and to take swift action against them.
- Imposing more political and economic pressures on the Israeli occupation forces, including international isolation measures and economic sanctions, in order to compel them to reduce human rights violations, and remove the root causes of the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the policies of forced displacement, demolition, and settlement expansion and the siege imposed on Gaza.

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