



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and
intergovernmental organizations
relevant to the question of Palestine

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The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:
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I. UNESCO ADOPTS DECISIONS RELATED TO QUESTION OF PALESTINE

During its meeting held in Paris on 1 May, the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the following draft decisions related to the question of Palestine:

1. Having examined document 201 EX/30,

2. Recalling the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (1949) and their additional Protocols (1977), the 1907 Hague Regulations on Land Warfare, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its additional Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the inscription of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls at the request of Jordan on the World Heritage List (1981) and on the List of World Heritage in Danger (1982), and the recommendations, resolutions and decisions of UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage, as well as resolutions and decisions of UNESCO relating to Jerusalem, also recalling previous UNESCO decisions relating to the reconstruction and development of Gaza as well as UNESCO decisions on the two Palestinian sites in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem,

3. Affirming that nothing in the current decision, which aims, *inter alia*, at the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Palestine and the distinctive character of East Jerusalem, shall in any way affect the relevant Security Council and United Nations resolutions and decisions on the legal status of Palestine and Jerusalem, including United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 (2016),

30.1 Jerusalem

4. Reaffirming the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls for the three monotheistic religions,

5. Reminding that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the “basic law” on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith,

6. Further recalling the 11 decisions of the Executive Board: 185 EX/Decision 14, 187 EX/Decision 11, 189 EX/Decision 8, 190 EX/Decision 13, 192 EX/Decision 11, 194 EX/Decision 5.D, 195 EX/Decision 9, 196 EX/Decision 26, 197 EX/Decision 32, 199 EX/Dec.19.1, 200 EX/Decision 25 and the seven World Heritage Committee decisions: 34 COM/7A.20, 35 COM/7A.22, 36 COM/7A.23, 37 COM/7A.26, 38 COM/7A.4, 39 COM/7A.27, 40 COM/7A.13,

7. Regrets the failure of the Israeli occupying authorities to cease the persistent excavations, tunneling, works and projects in East Jerusalem, particularly in and around the Old City of Jerusalem, which are illegal under international law and reiterates its request to Israel, the occupying Power, to prohibit all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;

8. Also regrets the Israeli refusal to implement the UNESCO request to the Director-General to appoint a permanent representative to be stationed in East Jerusalem to report on a regular basis about all aspects covering the fields of competence of UNESCO in East Jerusalem, and reiterates its request to the Director-General to appoint, as soon as possible, the above-mentioned representative;

9. Stresses again the urgent need to implement the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, and invites the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre, to exert all possible efforts, in line with their mandates and in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, decisions and resolutions, to ensure the prompt implementation of the mission and, in case of non-implementation, to propose possible effective measures to ensure its implementation;

30.11 Reconstruction and development of Gaza

10. Deplores the military confrontations in and around the Gaza Strip and the civilian casualties caused, as well as the continuous negative impact in the fields of competence of UNESCO, the attacks on schools and other educational and cultural facilities, including breaches of the inviolability of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools;

11. Also deplores the continuous Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip, which harmfully affects the free and sustained movement of personnel, students and humanitarian relief items and requests Israel to immediately ease this closure;

12. Thanks the Director-General for initiatives that have already been implemented in Gaza in the fields of education, culture and youth and for the safety of media professionals, calls upon her to continue her active involvement in the reconstruction of Gaza's damaged educational and cultural components and reiterates, in this regard, its request to her to upgrade the UNESCO Antenna in Gaza and to organize, as soon as possible, an information meeting on the current situation in Gaza in the fields of

competence of UNESCO and on the outcome of the projects conducted by UNESCO;

30.111 The two Palestinian sites of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Al-Khalil/Hebron and the Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem

13. Reaffirms that the two concerned sites located in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem are an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and shares the conviction affirmed by the international community that the two sites are of religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam;

14. Deplores the ongoing Israeli excavations, works, construction of private roads for settlers and of a Wall inside the Old City of Al-Khalil/Hebron which are illegal under international law and harmfully affect the authenticity and integrity of the site, and the subsequent denial of freedom of movement and freedom of access to places of worship and asks Israel, the occupying Power, to end all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;

15. Regrets the visual impact of the Wall on the site of Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as well as the strict ban on access of Palestinian Christian and Muslim worshippers to the site, and demands that the Israeli authorities restore the original character of the landscape around the site and to lift the ban on access to it;

30.IV

15. Decides to include these matters under an item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda at its 202nd session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

II. UNSCO REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE OF DONORS EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN GAZA

On 1 May 2017, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process submitted its report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the period 15 September 2016 to 15 April 2017. The following is the [executive summary](#) of the report:

Despite a number of international efforts over the past six months to advance the two-state solution, the reporting period has been characterized by a continued lack of progress on the political front. Contrary to the recommendations outlined in the [July 2016 report](#) by the Middle East Quartet, the period has seen a surge in Israeli settlement-related activity and a continued high rate of demolitions in Palestinian and Bedouin communities at risk of forcible transfer in Area C of the West Bank, continuing acts of violence against civilians, signs of a deepening political rift between Gaza and the West Bank, and continued military build-up and firing of rockets by extremist groups in Gaza.

At the same time, renewed efforts to reconcile Fatah and Hamas have failed with signs that the two sides may be drifting further apart. Unable to reach agreement on the holding of municipal elections that would cover both the West Bank and Gaza, preparations are now underway for separate municipal elections in the West Bank. The disputes between the PA and Hamas have aggravated an already difficult situation in the Gaza Strip, due to intra-Palestinian disagreement over electricity, payment of salaries and other critical issues. As a result, tensions in Gaza are, once again, growing.

The increasingly difficult situation in Gaza is further compounded by continued access restrictions. The reporting period witnessed a decline in the number of Palestinians allowed to leave Gaza, including a significant drop in the Israeli approval rates for businessmen, medical patients and employees of international organizations to exit the Strip. The

restrictions were further intensified during a ten-day ban by Hamas at the end of March on movement from Gaza to Israel for both Palestinians and internationals. In the West Bank, despite a slight increase in the number of movement obstacles reported in 2016, the period also witnesses a positive shift towards more flexibility in the type of movement obstacles and, significantly, an increase in work permits for Palestinians in the West Bank to work in Israel.

The humanitarian situation remains grave, especially in Gaza, where 1.2 million people need some form of humanitarian assistance in large part due to inadequate basic service delivery, poverty, high food prices, and frequent rights violations. At the same time some 40,000 people remain internally displaced in Gaza, as they wait for their homes to be rebuilt following damages sustained during the 2014 conflict. The situation is aggravated by the critical shortages in electricity, including daily power cuts of 18-20 hours, further impeding the delivery of basic services. Meanwhile, the West Bank is facing a protracted protection crisis due to the coercive environment created by a range of Israeli policies and practices, including the restrictive and discriminatory planning regime. During the reporting period, a key concern has been the risk of forcible transfers and demolition of Palestinian structures, particularly in the vulnerable Bedouin and herding communities in Area C.

The human rights situation across Palestine continues to be worrisome. Use of force by Israeli forces in response to Palestinian attacks, punitive demolitions and a general lack of accountability for

past killings and injuries remains significant sources of concern that also erode trust between the parties. At the same time, both Israeli and Palestinian security forces continue the practice of administrative detentions, holding people without charge or trial for indefinite periods of time.

Socio-economic despair, underpinned by the persistent hardships of the occupation, including violations of the law of occupation and fragile democratic institutions, continued to affect stability in the West Bank and to threaten erosion of the achievements of the Palestinian state-building agenda. The institutions of Palestinian governance remain vulnerable to political instability and require affirmative steps to protect and advance state-building efforts. With the finalization of the Palestinian National Policy Agenda (NPA) for 2017-2022 in February, the Palestinian Authority took a significant step towards strengthening its institutions and improving governance, while reiterating its commitment to state-building.

This summer marks ten years since the 2007 Hamas take-over of the Gaza Strip. Over the past decade, the socio-economic and humanitarian developments in the Gaza Strip have been heavily impacted by the Hamas take-over, the Israeli closures, the Palestinian division and the recurrent conflicts. Analyzing the impact of these developments in Gaza, it is clear that the effects are compounding each other,

together causing an increasingly difficult environment for the two million people living in Gaza. Over the last decade, Gaza's infrastructure, basic services and private sector have been gradually debilitated, the Gazan economy has weakened with real GDP per capita and employment decreasing over time and the gender gap continuing to grow. This general state of decay is being further compounded by periodic escalation of hostilities. As a result, there has been a steady deterioration of living standards and an increase in the vulnerability of the Strip's population, which is also further amplified in times of crisis when hostilities have escalated. Gaza is now facing a downward spiral of de-development, while the people in Gaza are caught in a cycle of humanitarian need and perpetual aid dependency.

Amid signs of deepening separation between Gaza and the West Bank, fraying prospects to achieve Palestinian national unity increase the risk for escalation on the ground and further complicate efforts to resuscitate the stalled peace process. The international community has collectively reaffirmed its commitment to support the parties to achieve a just and sustainable peace through the two-state solution. Developments during the reporting period however, especially expansive illegal settlement activity, chronic human rights violations and violence against civilians, threaten to make the two-state solution unviable.

III. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CALLS FOR SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN STATE-BUILDING EFFORTS AT AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

On 4 May 2017, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov made the following [remarks](#) at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of donors in Brussels:

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I am grateful to Norway and the EU for convening and chairing this important forum. I join others in welcoming Jason Greenblatt and wish him and all of us success.

Given the limited time, I will restrict my remarks to only the most pressing issues.

Firstly, let me begin with the context in which our discussions take place. The impasse of the Middle East Peace Process is pushing both Israelis and Palestinians to take unilateral steps that drive them further away from each other and reduce the prospects for peace. Settlement expansion, violence, and the absence of visionary leadership continue to define the conflict on a daily basis.

In this context political initiatives are important. In a Middle East that is the midst of a perfect storm of sectarian violence, terror and failing states developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict continue to resonate across the region. The question of Palestine remains a potent symbol and rallying cry that is easily misappropriated and exploited by extremist groups.

The first step in restoring hope is to recognize that both Palestinians and Israelis have legitimate national and historic aspirations that can only be met if they separate in two states that live in peace, security and mutual recognition. That is why now is not the time to give up on the two-state solution.

The second step is to work on the ground to build trust. Steps that reverse the

negative trends, including settlement expansion, violence and incitement and address the illicit arms buildup and militant activity in Gaza. But also steps that are in line with existing agreements. Progress in the areas of housing, water, energy, and other sectors, along with significantly easing Palestinian movement restrictions, can be made while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs. There has been much discussion of these steps in the AHLC format.

It is worth highlighting today the significant efforts of the Palestinian leadership to reduce its budget deficit as the PA faces an 800 million dollar financing gap in the coming year. We in the international community must support the Palestinian Authority's state-building efforts, or risk losing the very foundations of the future Palestinian state. So must Israel, as it is in her security and national interest to see stability and prosperity in the neighbourhood.

In our discussions in the last two days we agreed on the need for increased Palestinian and Israeli economic cooperation and an easing of restrictions on access and movement. While the goodwill and understanding is there — and important water and electricity agreements have been reached, their implementation is still severely lacking. The questions of fiscal leakages, energy, water and access have to be urgently addressed. We must support the parties in reviving their efforts to find solutions to these key economic challenges, as we work to restore a political perspective.

The third step is a return to negotiations. Today it is not just the Israeli

and Palestinian leaderships that recognize the risks posed by the Middle East's turmoil. The region — Egypt, Jordan and beyond agree that cooperation — rather than confrontation, is now needed more than ever. This creates a unique opportunity that must be used. The Arab Peace Initiative is still on the table, the Middle East Quartet is engaging on the issues at hand and the new US administration has quickly taken these challenges to task. It is important that we do not miss the opportunity to help the parties find their way back to negotiations.

Allow me now to briefly turn to Gaza.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we speak we are walking into another crisis in Gaza with our eyes wide open. For the last ten years two million people are held hostage by disagreements, divisions and closures. It is time for this situation to end. In its report to the AHLC this year UNSCO focused on the effects of the ten years of Hamas control of the Gaza strip, the ensuing military confrontations and closures.

The current electricity crisis is a manifestation of the broader political crisis. Since the shutdown of the Gaza Power Plant, hospitals are operating on minimum capacity putting patient lives at risk. The population is supplied portable water only once every four to five days. More than 100,000 cubic meters of raw sewage is being discharged daily into the Mediterranean Sea. These developments increase health risks for both Palestinians and Israelis along the coast.

I urge all parties to refrain from taking actions that would further exacerbate the situation and to seek a political solution to the standoff. This situation can only be resolved through a compromise, based on the implementation of intra-Palestinian

agreements that would end the division and return Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities.

Until then and under the current circumstances the United Nations can only work to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable. The Palestinian Authority, Israel and indeed Hamas — who have controlled Gaza for a decade now — have obligations as duty-bearers for the welfare of Gaza's residents and must live up to their responsibilities.

We cannot continue business as usual. We do not have the luxury to manage the conflict, we must resolve it.

We must work in parallel on all tracks — on the political track, to restore hope;

on the trust building track, to encourage the parties to refrain from unilateral steps and improve the lives of people;

on the negotiations track, to help both sides find their way back to the negotiating table to address the final status issues;

on the international track, to support through the Middle East Quartet framework and the region a just and lasting two-state solution;

on the security front, to prevent terror and fight incitement;

and last but not least on addressing the grave situation and the risks emanating from Gaza.

There is much work to be done and I thank you for making the AHLC a very useful format for these discussions.

Thank you.

IV. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS ON ISRAEL TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW ON DETENTION

On 16 May 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, called on Israel to comply with international standards for detention. The following is the related [press release](#) issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, today urged Israel to comply with international law and international standards for detention.

The expert's call comes as the ongoing hunger strike by approximately 1,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails enters its second month. They are requesting better and consistent access to health care, more liberal family visit policies, and an end to solitary confinement and administrative detention.

"I am particularly concerned with Israel's use of administrative detention, which involves imprisonment without charge, trial, conviction or meaningful due process, as well as the possibility of unrestricted renewal of their detention," the human rights expert said, highlighting that administrative detainees are imprisoned on secret evidence that neither they nor their lawyers can review or challenge.

"Israel's use of administrative detention is not in compliance with the extremely limited circumstances in which it is allowed under international humanitarian law, and deprives detainees of basic legal safeguards guaranteed by international human rights law," Mr. Lynk said recalling his first report to the UN General Assembly. The Rapporteur noted that there are approximately 500 Palestinian administrative detainees.

The Special Rapporteur also noted that many of the 6,000 Palestinian prisoners

held by Israel are incarcerated in prisons within Israel, and not in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in contravention of International Humanitarian Law.

"These transfers create significant barriers to the families of prisoners who wish to visit them, due to the difficulty of obtaining permits to enter Israel, and the often arduous journey families must undertake to reach their relatives," he pointed out.

Mr. Lynk expressed concern about the reports he has received that prisoners are being held in solitary confinement, being denied access to lawyers, and experiencing other forms of deprivation due to their participation in the hunger strike. He warned that Israel's 2015 law allowing force-feeding could be used in this circumstance, and called on Israel to comply with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

"Prisoners everywhere have a right to engage in hunger strikes to protest their living conditions, and they should not be punished as a result," Mr. Lynk stressed. "Force-feeding is a practice that human rights experts have found could amount to torture."

The Special Rapporteur is currently undertaking his annual visit to the region. Due to Israel's lack of response to his request to travel to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he is in Amman, Jordan, from 15 to 19 May.

"I deeply regret not having the opportunity to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to speak face-to-

face with victims and witnesses of Israel's alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law," he stressed.

During his five-day mission, the independent expert will meet with officials, community leaders and civil society representatives, among others. He

will discuss the human rights situation across the Occupied Palestinian Territory in order to gather evidence and information for his upcoming reports.

The Special Rapporteur will present his next report to the General Assembly in October 2017 on his findings and conclusions.

V. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR'S EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER THE ONGOING HUNGER STRIKE IN ISRAELI JAILS

On 18 May 2017, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#) about the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian detainees:

"I am following with great concern the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian detainees protesting against their conditions in Israeli jails. The strike is now entering its second month and it is imperative that a resolution be found as soon as possible in line with International Humanitarian Law and Israel's human rights obligations.

With growing tensions on the Palestinian street, I hope that current efforts will result in an immediate resolution to the matter, which is in the interest of peace and ongoing initiatives to revive a political process.

I call on all actors to exercise maximum restraint, show responsibility and take all necessary steps to avoid escalating tensions."

VI. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE OPT ON THE EVE OF 50 YEARS OF OCCUPATION

The following is a [press release](#) released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 19 May 2017:

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, has expressed his deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in the OPT, on the eve of the 50th year of the Israeli occupation.

"Occupations are inherently temporary and short-term under international law, yet this occupation – after 5 decades – has no end in sight. Indeed, it is deeply entrenched, and Israel, the occupying

power, shows many signs of wanting to make it permanent," said Mr. Lynk.

"The systemic human rights violations that accompany this occupation – collective punishment, confiscation of property, excessive use of force and unlawful killings, lack of freedom of movement and steady settlement expansion, among others – are intensifying an already perilous situation," he warned.

The human right expert was speaking after a five-day mission to Amman, Jordan, where he met with human rights

groups, UN officials and senior Palestinian government officials to discuss the human rights situation. Israel has not permitted the Special Rapporteur to visit the OPT since he assumed his Mandate in May 2016.

“It is with great concern that I look towards the future of Gaza, with all the reports I received this week indicating that the situation in the Strip is extremely dire,” Mr. Lynk stressed. “The ongoing electricity crisis has created an untenable situation, with predictions that by mid-June, a significant proportion of essential health, sanitation and water services may be inoperable.”

“I am struck by the depth of hopelessness and frustration in Gaza that has been described to me this week,” the Rapporteur noted. “After ten years of closure, I call upon Israel and the international community to turn your urgent attention to this situation, which cannot and should not be ignored any longer. The human rights of the residents of Gaza must be respected - this is the only path forward.”

The human rights expert also expressed deep concern about the situation in the West Bank. He noted that Israel controls Area C in its entirety, which makes up 60 percent of the West Bank, and which completely surrounds the Palestinian-controlled areas.

“Significant settlement construction has recently been announced, settlers enjoy four times the allocation of West Bank water that Palestinians receive,

environmental degradation is spreading, and home demolitions are steadily increasing, all contributing to a situation in which many feel the path to peace is more and more difficult,” he said.

“I am particularly worried about the Bedouin communities in the Jerusalem periphery, who face the continued threat of displacement and destruction of their homes and livelihoods by the Israeli authorities,” said the expert. “Any displacement that occurs as a result of this coercive environment would amount to forcible transfer, which as I noted in my first report is a violation of international law.”

The Special Rapporteur drew attention to the current situation in East Jerusalem, where Palestinian Jerusalemites are confined to living in 13% of the area, while facing a consistent threat of losing their residency rights and considerable obstacles when applying for building permits.

“Israel has never recognized this part of the city as occupied territory, and the Jerusalem municipality treats its Palestinian residents in a highly discriminatory fashion when providing services,” he underscored.

“Protracted occupations are an abnormality and an anachronism in our modern world,” Mr. Lynk said. “In an era where almost the entire world lives as citizens in sovereign states of their own, it is beyond time that the international community deliver on its solemn promise of self-determination for the Palestinians.”

VII. ILO REPORT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR IMPROVING CONDITIONS OF PALESTINIAN WORKERS

On 19 May 2017, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Guy Ryder, submitted a report entitled “The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories” to the 106th session of the International Labour Conference. The following are the excerpts from the concluding observations contained in the report ([ILC.106/DG/APP](#)):

128. The peace process has not produced new initiatives for quite some time, and contacts between Israel and the Palestinian Authority remain at the minimum level needed for at least maintaining uneasy coexistence and avoiding human catastrophe. New paths and directions and corresponding maps are needed to put any meaningful negotiations on a new trajectory. Neither a standstill nor a return along the same route is a tenable longer run option. The destination of two states living peacefully side by side must be reconfirmed.

129. Hope can only be resurrected once meaningful negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians are restarted and support by the key actors of the international community has been restated. People need to feel that the occupation, together with the settlement activity, which are stifling the economy and the labour market in the occupied Arab territories, will eventually come to an end. Only then can social justice and decent work begin to flourish.

130. There is a social crisis in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Unemployment remains at alarmingly high levels, and opportunities for young people to secure a much-coveted first job are dim. Women, whose labour force participation is marginal, are among the most disadvantaged.

131. Gaza faces a bleak situation of impoverished entrapment. There are few jobs, and many economic and social indicators are only worsening. Humanitarian aid is keeping most of its

inhabitants above water, but it is difficult to estimate how long such destitution can continue or which kind of reactions it will produce.

132. The political divide in the Palestinian political landscape does not help governance. While the occupation leaves little room, state-building needs to continue. It is a sine qua non for strengthening the Palestinian position. There are encouraging signs that holes in the state fabric are being mended now, for instance with the new social security institution, but there are also indications of significant governance shortcomings. The international community needs to provide continued support, both technical and financial.

133. More than 100,000 Palestinians work in Israel and the settlements. The pay there is attractive, but the conditions, especially those related to access, are not. There are humiliating incidents at the daily crossings, and brokers on both sides benefit disproportionately. This is one area where cooperation between the parties could bring rapid and significant improvements. Reforms are now being put in place by Israel to diminish the power of the brokers, and it is to be hoped that this will improve the rights and conditions for Palestinian workers. Regulating the abuses of brokers and facilitating access and conditions is necessary, but at the same time, it needs to be recognized that work in Israel cannot be the solution to Palestinian labour market problems.

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VIII. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR WARNS OF FURTHER DETERIORATION OF ELECTRICITY CRISIS IN GAZA

On 22 May 2017, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#):

Gaza has been experiencing a severe electricity crisis since mid-April, when the Gaza Power Plant went silent due to a dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in Gaza over tax rates for the fuel needed at the plant.

Since mid-April, electricity levels have fluctuated between about 100 and 150 Megawatts. In practical terms, this means that most households and services in Gaza receive electricity from the grid for at most, four hours at a time, followed by a 12 hour power-cut.

Gaza has been chronically deprived of electricity for at least a decade. But we are reaching the end of the fifth week in which a chronic crisis has become acute. These kinds of levels of electricity have a grave impact on the supply of safe drinking water, on the treatment and management of sewerage, on the availability of health services, on businesses, on schools, and much more.

Gaza's most vulnerable citizens are paying the highest price during this crisis. No household in Gaza is untouched, but the situation of patients on dialysis, disabled persons living in apartment buildings without reliable elevators or water supply and the elderly is especially precarious.

There are indications that the electricity situation will deteriorate further still next week. These new developments will deepen even further the existing crisis.

The Palestinian Authority, Hamas - which has controlled Gaza for a decade - and Israel as the Occupying Power, all have obligations for the welfare of Gaza's residents and must live up to their responsibilities.

I urge all parties to come together to reverse the current trajectory towards another major humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

IX. WHO REPORT CALLS FOR UNHINDERED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN OPT

On 22 May 2017, the Director-General of the World Health Organization issued a report on "Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan", prepared for the 70th World Health Assembly. The following are recommendations from the report ([A70/39](#)):

28. In accordance with decision WHA69(10), practical recommendations for improving the health conditions in the occupied Syrian Golan are expected to be developed following additional research, discussion and information gathering, in particular through further field assessment, which will collectively provide the background necessary for

recommendations to be presented to the Seventy-first World Health Assembly.

29. The Director-General has developed the following 10 recommendations for improving health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem:

Recommendation 1: Israeli authorities have the following obligations under international law:

- To establish procedures, which enable undelayed access 24/7, for all Palestinian patients requiring specialized health care, including exit out of Gaza and access into Jerusalem, and which at the same time safeguard Israeli security concerns;

- To establish procedures that ensure Palestinian health care personnel to be able to work, train and specialize in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and abroad;

- Establish procedures that enable ambulances to have free access to patients and health care institutions without unnecessary delay.

Recommendation 2: The Palestinian Authority in collaboration with international partners should continue to improve the referral system, including further improvement of technical solutions and procedures to make the process easier, quicker, more transparent, more equitable and less costly.

Recommendation 3: The Palestinian Authority should consolidate efforts to progress towards universal health coverage through a policy dialogue for equitable and sustainable quality health services.

Recommendation 4: The Palestinian Authority should explore options for medical goods to be exempt from the Paris Protocol trade restrictions, and medical supplies should be considered essential humanitarian items.

Recommendation 5: The Palestinian Authority in collaboration with the Palestinian Medical Council should develop a comprehensive health work force strategy linked to the disease burden and projected speciality service's needs.

Recommendation 6: Israeli authorities should ensure that health care workers have unhindered access to their workplace, and have possibilities for professional development and specialization.

Recommendation 7: Consolidated efforts should be considered to overcome the political divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including agreement on a viable solution to ensure equitable and sustainable payment of all health care workers.

Recommendation 8: All parties should adhere to the United Nations Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) stating relevant customary international law concerned with the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and medical facilities.

Health care workers need to be respected and protected, and should not be prevented in their provision of health care to sick or injured patients. Information about this obligation to respect and protect health care workers and facilities and not to impede the provision of health care by preventing passage of medical personnel should be disseminated to security personnel at checkpoints and borders, armed forces and law enforcement personnel.

The Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society should continue systematically to document and monitor attacks on health care personnel and facilities to ensure accountability of perpetrators.

Recommendation 9:

- Israeli and Palestinian authorities should consider organizing the prison health services independently from the prison services to ensure impartiality, and independent quality health services;

- Security-controlled Palestinian physicians should be allowed to visit patients regularly in Israeli prisons.

No one should be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All complaints of torture should be investigated.

Recommendation 10: The mental health strategy developed by the

Palestinian Ministry of Health involving all major stakeholders should be expanded to improve data generation on the mental health disease burden, to enhance capacity-building of mental health professionals and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the progress of integrating mental health services.

X. UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OPT CONCERNED OVER DEATH SENTENCES ISSUED BY GAZA MILITARY COURT

On 23 May 2017, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the following [press release](#):

OHCHR oPt has expressed its deepest concern at three death sentences issued by a military court in Gaza on 21 May 2017. Carrying out these sentences would amount to an arbitrary deprivation of life in violation of international law.

The three men were convicted of involvement in the killing of Hamas leader Mr. Mazen Al Faqhaa on 24 March 2017 and tried on charges of “collaboration with an enemy party” and “murder or accessory to murder”. The special “field military court” was constituted solely for this trial, the first such instance since the Hamas takeover of Gaza in 2007.

The conviction and sentence of a “field military court” are final, allowing no possibility of appeal or plea for clemency,

in violation of international law. International law sets very stringent conditions for the application of the death penalty, including meticulous compliance with international fair trial standards. These trials do not appear to meet these minimum standards.

We urge authorities in Gaza not to carry out the death sentences of these three men, to refrain from carrying out further executions and to curb the practice of trying civilians before military courts.

OHCHR opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. We call on the State of Palestine to immediately establish an official moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to its abolition.

XI. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS URGES ISRAEL TO RESPECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF DETAINEES

On 24 May 2017, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein expressed alarm at the mass hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. The following is the related [press release](#):

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein on Wednesday expressed serious concern as the mass hunger strike by Palestinian

prisoners in Israeli prisons entered its 38th day without resolution, and the health of hundreds of participating prisoners began to deteriorate significantly.

More than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners began a hunger strike on 17 April, demanding, amongst other things, an end to administrative detention and solitary confinement. The hunger strikers are also demanding an increase in the number and length of family visits and improved access to healthcare. Both Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations have corroborated many of the complaints of the prisoners and have called on the Israeli authorities to improve the conditions of Palestinian prisoners. According to reports, the Israel Prison Service has evacuated at least 60 hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners to hospitals because their medical condition had worsened, while another 592 hunger strikers have recently been moved for observation to infirmaries set up in the prisons.

“I am especially alarmed by reports of punitive measures by the Israeli authorities against the hunger strikers, including restricted access to lawyers and the denial of family visits,” Zeid said. “The right of detainees to access a lawyer is a fundamental protection in international human rights law that should never be curtailed.”

The International Committee of the Red Cross, in a statement issued on 3 May 2017, also noted that the right to family visits is enshrined in the Fourth Geneva

Convention of 1949 and should never be restricted for punitive reasons.

The Israeli practice of administrative detention is in breach of the key safeguards of Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The widespread use of administrative detention, with hundreds held every year also raises concerns that Israel does not respect the principle of the exceptional nature of administrative detention under international humanitarian law. In 2000, Israel reportedly held 12 Palestinians in administrative detention. Today, that figure has risen to some 500 Palestinian prisoners who are being held without charge or trial in administrative detention.

“Various international bodies have repeatedly called on Israel to end its practice of administrative detention. Such detainees should either be charged with an offence and tried according to international standards, or released immediately,” High Commissioner Zeid said.

An estimated 6,300 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli prisons, mostly outside the occupied Palestinian territory, in contravention of article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Regardless of where or on what legal basis they are held, the treatment of detainees must in any event be consistent with international law, including the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

XII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 26 May 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from his briefing ([S/PV.7953](#)):

...

On his recent visit to the Middle East, while United States President Trump pressed for a common approach to

addressing the scourge of extremism and terrorism, he also made it very clear that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is critical to combating this threat and to

achieving peace in the region. I welcome his personal engagement and that of Arab, Israeli and Palestinian leaders to advance this goal. However, during the past month, the complex dynamics on the ground have been creating an explosive environment.

In Gaza, we are walking into another crisis with our eyes wide open. I am today warning the Security Council that unless urgent measures are taken to de-escalate, the crisis risks spiralling out of control, with devastating consequences for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Since Hamas established an administrative committee in March, a parallel institution to run Governmental affairs in Gaza, the intra-Palestinian political tug-of-war has led to a significant deterioration in relations between Fatah and Hamas. The result is a significant worsening of the humanitarian crisis that risks exploding into another conflict, which can only begin to be resolved by compromise, the implementation of intra-Palestinian agreements and an ending of the closures.

In April, the Palestinian Government upheld its decision to reduce salary allowances to nearly 60,000 public sector employees in Gaza. While the Government needs to ensure its fiscal sustainability under increasingly difficult economic conditions, it is important that reforms or decisions to reduce expenditures be fairly distributed and made with consideration to the harsh conditions in Gaza.

Gaza is also in the midst of an unprecedented energy crisis. The power plant that supplies 30 per cent of Gaza's electricity stopped functioning on 16 April, due to a dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas over taxation on fuel. The lines supplying power from Egypt into Gaza are often down for technical reasons. This leaves Israeli power lines, which provide some 60 per cent of Gaza's electricity, as the only reliable energy source. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Government has decided to cap

its purchase of electricity from Israel for Gaza. If implemented, this decision would further reduce electricity supply to Gaza from Israel by some 30 per cent, plunging its population into a spiral of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Since April, the majority of Palestinians in Gaza have been receiving about four hours of electricity per day. How long do Council members think they can survive if this is further reduced to two hours of electricity per day? Who will pay the price of the ensuing violence and escalation? It will not be those who live a life of exemption and privilege. The price will be paid by poor Palestinians — by women and children, by people already traumatized by conflict, who have been held hostage for a decade now. They are the ones who will not have access to electricity, to water, to health services and sanitation.

No one has any interest in another conflict in Gaza. Everyone has a responsibility to avoid it. For months, the United Nations has warned that without addressing the structural problems of Gaza's electricity supply we would face a humanitarian crisis. Those warnings are now a reality. Let me illustrate to the Council what that reality looks like. Hospitals are now forced to postpone elective surgeries and have already reduced 80 per cent of cleaning, catering and sterilization services. Had it not been for the timely United Nations humanitarian intervention on 27 April to provide emergency fuel for generators, some 51 surgical and obstetric operation theatres, five hemodialysis centres and a number of emergency departments would have had to close. Since mid-April, desalination plants have been functioning at 15 per cent of their capacity, and drinking water has been supplied for a few hours every two to four days.

As we speak 100,000 cubic metres of raw sewage are discharged into the

Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis. This is the equivalent of 40 Olympic-size swimming pools of untreated sewage daily, which is an environmental disaster in the making for Israel, Egypt and Gaza.

Food prices are soaring as the price of water for irrigation has gone up by some 65 per cent. The manufacturing sector is grinding to a halt, and over half of private industry workers have been suspended. The United Nations is working determinedly to mitigate the humanitarian impact of this crisis. A United Nations-managed emergency fuel operation is delivering fuel to essential services for water, health and sanitation, but our reserves will run out in the coming weeks. It can only temporarily alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable, but is no substitute for a sustainable solution.

Defusing the current energy crisis will require compromise on all sides, including tax concessions on fuel for the power plant and a profound reform of how energy is supplied in Gaza. The Palestinian Authority, Hamas — which has controlled Gaza for a decade — and Israel all have obligations for the welfare of Gaza's residents and must live up to their responsibilities to address the crisis and overcome its political impasse. Over the past weeks, I have engaged with the parties and our international partners not only to find a solution to the immediate electricity challenges, but also to address the broader political challenge of returning Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities.

With respect to another troubling development, allow me to join the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in condemning yesterday's executions of three men in Gaza, in contravention of international law. These executions bring to 28 the number of death sentences carried out since the Hamas takeover in 2007, with nine just in the past year.

Turning to the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in recent weeks we have seen more tragic examples of the human toll that this conflict is inflicting, with six Palestinians killed in various acts of violence. I am also very concerned by the ongoing hunger strike of Palestinian detainees protesting against their conditions in Israeli jails, which, on the eve of Ramadan, has now entered its fortieth day. According to reports, the Israeli prison service has evacuated at least 60 hunger-striking prisoners to hospitals because their medical condition had worsened, while another close to 600 prisoners have been moved to infirmaries set up in the prisons. Reports of punitive measures against the hunger strikers, including restricted access to lawyers and the denial of family visits, are alarming. The right of detainees to access a lawyer is a right that should never be curtailed.

I call for a redoubling of efforts to end the strike as soon as possible. The crisis must be resolved in line with international humanitarian law and Israel's human rights obligations. All actors should exercise maximum restraint and responsibility and take the necessary steps to avoid escalating tensions.

On 4 May, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians met in Brussels to discuss the key socioeconomic challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority. Regrettably, a number of key issues remain unresolved between the parties on access and movement, energy, water and fiscal sustainability. While many of the solutions are technical, ultimately the decisions to implement them are political. I am encouraged by the fact that in recent weeks, the Israeli and Palestinian Ministers of Finance have come together in an effort to move these issues forward. Their fruitful consultations, the first meeting of the Joint Water Committee in

seven years and the progress in the implementation of last year's landmark electricity agreement are positive steps that need to be encouraged and supported.

I also take note of recently announced Israeli measures designed to help the Palestinian economy in the West Bank. These steps reportedly include the proposed zoning of land in Area C, adjacent to several Palestinian cities, for their residential, industrial and agricultural use; the development of industrial zones in Tarkumiya and Hebron; and expanding the hours of operation of the Allenby Bridge crossing. These are positive steps that will also need to be substantially expanded if they are to achieve the desired effect.

...

In closing, allow me to say a few words on efforts to advance the prospects for peace. As the conflict has ebbed and flowed, the key messages to both sides from the United Nations, including through its role in the Quartet and the broader international community, have remained clear, consistent and firm. Above all, Israel's almost 50-year occupation and settlement enterprise are untenable and must end through meaningful negotiations that address the final status issues. Their perpetuation is sending an unmistakable message to another generation of Palestinians that their dream of statehood is destined to remain just that — a dream — and to Israelis that their desire for peace, security and regional recognition also remains unattainable.

Still, much can and must be done. Israel can undertake transformative steps

to improve the daily lives of Palestinians, to empower the Palestinian leadership and to move meaningfully towards a negotiated resolution of the conflict, in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions. Palestinians, too, should heed the repeated calls to combat violence and incitement. Internally, they must also rise to the challenge of forging a genuine reconciliation, which is critical to advancing peace and fulfilling their national aspirations.

This summer will mark 10 years since Hamas' violent 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip. The past decade has seen Gaza's infrastructure, its basic services and its private sector gradually debilitated, its economy weakened, with real gross domestic product per capita and employment decreasing, and the gender gap continuing to grow. Gaza faces a downward spiral of de-development. The widening socioeconomic gap between Gaza and the West Bank further highlights the need to end the drivers of this inhumane and volatile situation. Deteriorating conditions only fuel anger and instability, strengthen extremists and undermine chances for a serious political process.

If Israelis and Palestinians hope to extract themselves from the immeasurable burden this conflict has wrought, they must be willing to take the painful steps that will ultimately lead to peace. Neither side can afford another missed opportunity.

XIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WELCOMES END OF MASS HUNGER STRIKE IN ISRAELI PRISONS

On 27 May 2017, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#):

“I welcome reports that Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention suspended their hunger strike this morning under an agreement reached between concerned parties.

I call on all sides to abide by the terms of the agreement and avoid similar heightened tensions in the future.”

XIV. OCHA REPORT SAYS OCCUPATION KEY CAUSE OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN THE OPT

On 31 May 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs released its 2016 [annual report](#) for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The following are excerpts from the related [press release](#):

...

As the 50th anniversary of Israeli occupation approaches, [OCHA’s 2016 Annual Report](#) for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), released today, underscores that occupation policies and practices remain the key cause of humanitarian needs in the oPt. The internal Palestinian political divide is also a serious contributing factor.

“OCHA’s Annual Report explains why there is a humanitarian programme in the oPt,” said David Carden, Head of OCHA in the oPt. “At its heart, the crisis in the oPt is one of a lack of protection for Palestinian civilians – from violence, from displacement, from restrictions on access to services and livelihoods, and from other rights violations – with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, children in particular. While the trends vary from one year to the next, the pervasive lack of protection and accountability for violations of international law remains.”

The new report observes that, in 2016, Palestinian fatalities from conflict-related violence in the oPt and Israel declined by 37 per cent compared with 2015 (107 vs. 169); the decline in Israeli fatalities was 48

per cent. Palestinian injuries (as opposed to fatalities) declined by about 80 per cent compared with 2015 (3,247 vs 15,477), with the vast majority recorded in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Forced displacement of Palestinians also continued. While there was no new displacement in the Gaza Strip, as the August 2014 ceasefire continued to largely hold, more than 9,000 families (47,200 people) remained displaced at the end of 2016. In the West Bank, more Palestinians were displaced in 2016 (1,601, including 759 children) due to demolitions of their homes by the Israeli authorities than in any year since OCHA began recording the phenomenon in 2009. The vast majority of the 1,094 affected structures were targeted on grounds that they lacked a building permit, which is nearly impossible to obtain from the Israeli authorities. Twenty-nine (29) structures were demolished or sealed on punitive grounds, targeting the family homes of perpetrators of attacks against Israelis, citing the need to deter future attacks. Thousands of others in Area C and East Jerusalem were at risk of displacement and/or forcible transfer, due to a coercive environment generated by Israeli policies and practices, which create

pressure on residents to leave their communities.

Restrictions on Palestinian movement and access to basic services and humanitarian assistance also continued throughout the oPt, despite some easing of measures. The number of Palestinians allowed to leave Gaza by the Israeli authorities, which increased after the 2014 hostilities, declined in the second half of 2016, while the volume of produce leaving Gaza has risen significantly. The isolation of Gaza was exacerbated by Egypt's continued closure of the Rafah crossing, which was opened only for 44 days in 2016, up from 32 in 2015. In the West Bank, as of December 2016, OCHA had recorded 572 movement obstacles overall, and an additional 110 obstacles deployed within the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2). Palestinian access to land behind the Barrier continued to be channelled through 84 gates, 65 of which opened only during the olive harvest.

In 2016, humanitarian organizations continued to face a range of obstacles to their ability to deliver aid. Israeli restrictions on the entry of national staff of aid organizations to and from Gaza intensified in 2016, with 31 per cent of permit applications to enter or exit Gaza

denied, compared with an average of four per cent in 2015. Humanitarian operations in Gaza were also impeded by restrictions imposed by the Hamas authorities, as well as by donor-imposed prohibitions on contact with them, in addition to the continuing closure of the Rafah crossing with Egypt and the ongoing internal Palestinian divide.

“Nearly a decade of blockade, internal divide and recurring conflict, alongside a lack of action to adopt measures that would resolve chronic needs, has left the Gaza Strip especially vulnerable,” warned Mr. Carden.

In the West Bank, the number of incidents obstructing the movement of UN and international organization employees increased compared with 2015 (211 compared to 183), but remains below the figures recorded in previous years. Also in 2016, the Israeli authorities demolished, or seized, 300 donor-funded structures provided as humanitarian assistance to Palestinians. This figure was nearly three times higher than that for 2015, with the value of the assistance destroyed or seized estimated at over US\$ 730,000. More than 100 additional aid structures also received demolition, stop-work, and eviction orders, or verbal warnings, placing them at risk.