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I. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN PREGNANT WOMEN GIVING BIRTH AT ISRAELI CHECKPOINTS

On 1 February 2007, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted under Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/7 a report on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints. The report (A/HRC/7/44) is reproduced below:

1. The Human Rights Council, in its decision 2/102, requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to “continue with the fulfilment of her activities, in accordance with all previous decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and to update the relevant reports and studies”. In its resolution 2005/7, the Commission on Human Rights requested the High Commissioner to report on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints owing to denial of access by Israel to hospitals. The Office of the High Commissioner (“the Office”) understands decision 2/102 as preserving the previous annual reporting cycle in respect of this issue, until otherwise decided by the Council. The present report to the Council accordingly addresses the developments that have occurred since the last report (A/HRC/4/57) on this issue was submitted to the Council at its fourth session.

2. On 20 November 2007, the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Mission of Israel and to the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, in which he indicated that he would appreciate receiving any comments or observations that they might wish to submit following Commission resolution 2005/7 and the most recent report submitted by the High Commissioner on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints (A/HRC/4/57).

3. On 11 December 2007, the Office received a reply from the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine indicating that the Israeli practices described in a report compiled by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in early 2007 persist. It also indicates that the number of cases of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints recorded in that report (69 cases) remains the same. The above-mentioned Israeli practices and cases of deliveries at checkpoints were described in detail in the previous report (A/HRC/4/57) of the High Commissioner.

4. At the time of writing, no reply had been received from the Permanent Mission of Israel.

5. In order to gather information on the issue, the Office also wrote on 6 November 2007 to the following United Nations entities and specialized agencies represented in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

6. Replies were received on 23 November 2007 from UNRWA and WHO. Both indicate that since all internal Israeli Defense Force (IDF) checkpoints were dismantled in Gaza in 2005, there were no cases of pregnant women giving birth at checkpoints in Gaza during the reporting period. In addition, WHO reports that since there was no referral for pregnancy-related conditions from Gaza to outside hospitals, no delivery was reported at the Erez checkpoint (currently the only checkpoint where patients can exit Gaza). Neither UNRWA nor WHO replies contain information concerning deliveries at checkpoints in the West Bank. However, on 3 January 2008, OHCHR received information from B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, concerning two cases of deliveries of Palestinian women. Both women had been forced to give birth in their respective cars following the refusal of the Israeli soldiers guarding a gate north of the village of 'Azzun 'Atmah, which is cut off from the rest of the West Bank by the Wall, to allow them to pass to get to a hospital in nearby Qalqiliya. A first case occurred on 12 December 2007, in which the delivery took place in the car after a delay of over half an hour at the gate. In the other case, which took place on 15 December 2007, a Palestinian woman from the village began to deliver in her car at 4.30 a.m., following a delay of more than one and half hours at the gate.

7. WHO further reports that, while the number of Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints is an important indicator, it is not sufficient to assess the accessibility of adequate medical services for pregnant women, the changing patterns of behaviour in response to mobility restrictions and their

implications for the right to health. According to studies referred to by WHO,¹ restricted mobility and increasing poverty have resulted in difficult situations for Palestinian pregnant women and limited access to health care. Closures (roadblocks and checkpoints) continue to have economic, medical and psychosocial implications for Palestinian pregnant women as follows:

(a) Unpredictable access to maternity services due to restrictions on movement is a determinant in medical decisions on induced labour and caesarean sections and it also discourages women from seeking quality post-natal care;

(b) Obstetricians at West Bank hospitals run by the Palestinian Authority (PA) report that complications have increased due to late arrivals after delays at checkpoints and late referrals from private hospitals for caesarean operations free of charge;

(c) Mobility restrictions impede continuity of medical care throughout the cycle of pregnancy (prenatal care, a hospital

¹ Laura Wick, *Birth at the Checkpoint, the Home or the Hospital? Adapting to the Changing Reality in Palestine*, Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, 15 June 2002; Rita Giacaman et al., "The Politics of Childbirth in the Context of Conflict: Policies or de facto Practices?", *Health Policy*, vol. 72, issue 2, May 2005, pp. 129-139; Laura Wick, "Childbirth in Palestine", *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, vol. 89, issue 2, May 2005, pp. 174-178; Rita Giacaman et al., "The Limitations on Choice: Palestinian Women's Childbirth Location, Dissatisfaction with the Place of Birth and Determinants", *European Journal of Public Health*, vol. 17, No. 1, February 2007, first published online 23 June 2006.

for delivery and post-natal care may not be accessible in the same location) and thus the development of a relationship of trust between medical staff and patients;

(d) Palestinian pregnant women and their families live with anxiety and stress, especially during the last period of pregnancy, of not being assured that they will be able to reach a maternity facility and to return home. Transport between the home and the hospital is a constant concern;

(e) Studies indicate that physical accessibility to services, in addition to their availability and affordability, is a factor in Palestinian women's choice of place of birth. According to a Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) survey carried out in 2004, 20 per cent of women interviewed reported that their childbirth location was not the preferred place of delivery; of those, 13.7 per cent stated that access was impeded by IDF measures;

(f) A drastic change in birth location patterns is reported even if this means a lower standard of health care, e.g. an increase in births attended at home or in doctors' clinics. While eliminating the need for displacement, home births involve high risks if not supported by emergency obstetric care and the ability to access a hospital when needed. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, emergency obstetric care is limited and access constitutes a vital problem with many roads blocked;

(g) Changes in utilization patterns have also had an impact on the quality of services: the higher caseloads in some maternity hospitals were generally not accompanied by an increase in the number of health providers putting further strain on PA hospitals already suffering from understaffing and overcrowding;

(h) In order to avoid having access to a maternity facility delayed or denied, pregnant women are reported to move to relatives living in towns (most of the childbirth infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is located in urban-based hospitals) a few weeks before the expected delivery;

(i) Mobility restrictions also disrupt social relations depriving pregnant women of psychosocial support by the wider family, which in Palestinian culture and society is especially important. Close family members are not able to accompany pregnant women to hospital or often arrive late.

8. WHO further reports that according to data published in April 2007 by PCBS, the infant mortality rate has slightly increased from 24.2/1,000 live births in 2004 to 25.3/1,000 live births in 2006. The under-five mortality rate has not changed from 2004 to 2006, which is 28.2/1,000 live births.

9. UNRWA reports scarce medical facilities in Gaza, where 7 out of 17 incubators for newborn babies have not been duly maintained due to the lack of spare parts in the local market, which appears to have resulted in a decline in health standards among newborns during the reporting period. According to UNRWA, the number of infant deaths at Gaza's main hospitals - Shifa hospital, Gaza paediatric hospital and the Gaza European hospital - was on average 20 per cent higher during the period of January-October 2007 than during the corresponding period in 2006. UNRWA also expresses concern over the significant delays of the process applicable for Gazans who require permits from the Israeli authorities to exit Gaza through the Erez crossing to receive necessary medical

treatment in hospitals outside Gaza. Referring to WHO statistics indicating that it has become more difficult for Gazan patients to receive an exit permit, UNRWA reports that while 89.4 per cent of patients who applied were granted a permit between January and May 2007, during October 2007, only 77.1 per cent of applicants received permits. Long delays are particularly detrimental for patients whose conditions are critical and necessitate immediate treatment outside Gaza.

10. With regard to pregnant women in Gaza, UNRWA reports that health facilities

in Gaza can provide treatment to most high-risk pregnancy women. Therefore, the number of high-risk pregnancy cases referred to hospitals in Israel or east Jerusalem from either health centres of the Ministry of Health or health centres operated by UNRWA is not high. Since February 2007, UNRWA reports that it has referred five pregnant women in need of tertiary care to Israeli hospitals. Among these, four cases resulted in maternal mortality.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ADOPTS COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP

On 3 February 2008, at its Expanded Extraordinary Meeting, the Organization of the Islamic Conference Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers adopted a final communiqué on the latest developments in Palestine, in particular the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. The communiqué was submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General and the Security Council in identical letters dated 11 March 2008 by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations in his capacity as Chair of the Organization's Group in New York. The text of the communiqué is reproduced below (A/62/693, S/2008/96):

Final communiqué of the Expanded Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the level of Foreign Ministers on the latest developments in Palestine, in particular the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip

The Expanded Extraordinary Meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers, meeting on 3 February 2008 (25 Muharram 1429H), at the Headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

Proceeding from the principles and objectives enshrined in the OIC Charter and acting in accordance with the OIC resolutions on the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif;

Hailing the steadfast resistance of the Palestinian people in the face of Israeli aggression and reaffirming its support of their just struggle in order to regain their inalienable and imprescriptible rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital, and their right to a just settlement of the issue of Palestinian refugees in

accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III);

Reaffirming that the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Al-Quds, constitute one single geographical unit;

Asserting that the persistent illegal Israeli violations and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories - including the assaults on the city of Al-Quds, the excavations and settlement activities; as well as the killings, assassinations, and incursions, most particularly the latest incursions and assaults in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which have left in their trail hundreds of victims among Palestinian civilians - constitute gross violations of human rights and exacerbate the humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories;

Noting that the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip - including closing down the border crossings and cutting the flow of fuel supplies, food, and medicines as well as actions in the West Bank such as setting road blocks - constitutes collective punishment of the civilian population; provokes serious humanitarian repercussions; and is considered a war crime, crime against humanity and a blatant breach of international law;

Having taken cognizance of the report of the OIC Secretary-General on the grave conditions in Palestine and the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip and having listened to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine and the interventions of Their Excellencies the Ministers and Heads of Delegations;

1. *Condemns* Israel for its despicable aggression on the Palestinian people and its illegal and illegitimate practices, most particularly the extrajudicial killings and assassinations, bombardment of homes and infrastructures, and the unjustifiable blockade that Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip as a collective punishment that comes under the category of war crimes. *Holds Israel*, the occupying force, *responsible* for the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip and asserts that these conditions are the direct result of Israel's persistent assault, closure of border crossings, and disruption of the flow of fuel, food, and medical supplies to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

2. *Expresses* its deep disappointment at the failure of the Security Council to assume its responsibility in addressing the humanitarian plight in Gaza, *calls upon* the international community to act swiftly and provide immediate protection for the Palestinian citizens in the occupied Palestinian territories and *tasks* the Islamic Group at the United Nations to pursue necessary measures to secure an adequate action by the United Nations.

3. *Welcomes* Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/S-6/L.1, adopted at its extraordinary session on 23 January 2008 on the human rights violations emanating from the Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip. *Calls* for the implementation of its provisions, especially the call to provide immediate protection for Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, in compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law.

4. *Welcomes* the initiative launched by the Secretary-General and aimed at drumming up essential support to secure the necessary humanitarian needs for the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip; *expresses* its appreciation for the role assumed by civil society institutions in the Member States by lending their help to the population of the Gaza Strip; and *exhorts* them to provide greater humanitarian assistance.

5. *Urges* the Member States, the Islamic Development Bank, and private financial institutions to endeavour to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in order to alleviate their suffering, which has been created by Israel's violations, including its blockade, killings, and starvation.

6. *Reiterates* its appreciation and support of the efforts deployed by the Arab Republic of Egypt in order to alleviate the Palestinian people's suffering and to find a way out of the current humanitarian crisis. The meeting *also expresses* its support for the call made by Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak for the Palestinian factions to expeditiously end their differences and resume the national dialogue on foundations that secure Palestinian national unity and serve the Palestinian people's higher interests in a way that is conducive to the reinstatement of

the legitimate authority's role in the Gaza Strip as soon as possible.

7. *Welcomes* the Palestinian Authority's declaration that it was ready to assume the responsibility for operating all Gaza Strip crossings; and *calls on* the parties concerned to resume the application of internationally agreed arrangements so as to ensure the reopening of the Gaza Strip crossings, including the Rafah crossing, and so as to prevent the recurrence of the current humanitarian crisis in the future.

8. *Reaffirms* its unequivocal support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with full sovereignty over all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, and with Al-Quds as its capital. *Reiterates* the illegality of Israeli measures aimed at judaizing the city of Al-Quds and altering its geo-demographic character as well as the illegality of the assaults and excavations being implemented within the vicinity of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

9. *Mandates* the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Chairs of the Summit and Foreign Ministers Conference and Palestine, to take the necessary steps in order to contact influential international stakeholders and the United Nations with a view to lifting the blockade on the Gaza Strip and resolving the ensuing humanitarian crisis.

III. BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE EXPRESSES ALARM AT DETERIORATING SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The following statement was issued on 4 February 2008 by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (GA/PAL/1071):

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expresses its alarm that the ever deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, could jeopardize the political momentum achieved through recent international efforts to encourage the resumption of the peace process, including the holding of the Annapolis conference, as well as the Paris Donors' Conference.

Routine Israeli military operations in the West Bank and air strikes at the Gaza Strip, the expansion of settlements in and around East Jerusalem, the continued construction of the wall in the West Bank, and the imposition of a damaging blockade and sanctions on the Gaza Strip are undermining the implementation of the Joint Understanding achieved by the parties at Annapolis and run contrary to Israel's Road Map obligations. Hundreds of Israeli checkpoints throughout the West Bank threaten to render any economic assistance ineffective.

Moreover, the economic and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has steadily degraded, with the population of the Gaza Strip suffering the most because of the closure of the Territory. More than half of the Palestinians live in poverty. Basic humanitarian needs continue to be unmet. In this regard, the Bureau reminds Israel in most resolute terms that, as the occupying

Power, it has a responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect the civilian population under its occupation. The Bureau was particularly disturbed by the ruling of Israel's High Court of Justice of 30 January, upholding the 2007 Government decision to reduce deliveries of electricity and fuel supply to the Gaza Strip, which is tantamount to collective punishment of Palestinians. The Bureau wishes to restate its position of condemning the killing of innocent civilians by both sides, including Israeli operations and the firing of rockets from Gaza. At the same time, the Bureau considers it totally unacceptable and unjust that the entire civilian population of the Gaza Strip is subjected to a suffocating economic blockade for the actions of a few militant groups. The Bureau supports the Palestinian Authority proposal to assume responsibility for the Palestinian side of all of the Gaza Strip's border crossings.

The Bureau deeply regrets that the Security Council, having considered the situation at a recent meeting, once again failed to act in response to the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Bureau calls on the international community to continue to make a contribution to alleviating the humanitarian emergency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is encouraged by the generous pledges made at the 2007 Paris Donors'

Conference. The Bureau also welcomed the launching of the 2008 Consolidated Appeal, and the announcement by the European Commission of the setting up of a new mechanism for channelling donor contributions in support of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan, building on the success of the Temporary International Mechanism.

The Bureau of the Committee calls on the international community to act urgently

and decisively, in order to move the peace process forward towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine through the establishment of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State, on the basis of the 1967 borders. A settlement should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS DEPLORES SUICIDE BOMBING IN DIMONA

The following statement was made on 4 February 2008 by Robert H. Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority:

Nothing can ever justify terrorist attacks, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) said after learning of today's suicide bombing in the southern Israeli town of Dimona.

"My sympathy and the sympathy of all my staff go first of all to the victims of this terrorist attack," Robert Serry told Israel

Radio after the bombing, in which an Israeli woman was killed along with the bomber.

"I think very much about the people of Dimona at this time and I can tell [you] that two weeks ago I happened to be also in Sderot when that city was subjected to a rain of rockets coming from Gaza. All these... terrorist actions of course serve no legitimate purpose. The UN condemns terror. Nothing can justify such attacks."

V. MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE OPENING OF THE 2008 SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The following is United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, as delivered on 14 February 2008 by Vijay Nambiar, Chef de Cabinet, to the opening of the 2008 session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in New York ((SG/SM/11418 , GA/PAL/1073):

Allow me to first send my congratulations to the Chairman and other distinguished members of the Bureau on your unanimous re-election to the leadership of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

You are opening this year's session at a time when recent positive developments on the diplomatic front provide some hope that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East can finally be reached.

At the same time, the escalation of violence at the start of the year reminds us of the fragility of the situation on the ground.

The United Nations remains committed to the establishment of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine and a just and agreed solution to the refugee problem, to allow all Palestinians to live in peace, dignity and security.

We actively support the process that started at Annapolis in November 2007. The conference, attended by some 50 Governments, including key members of the Arab League, together with international organizations, marked a new beginning for the Middle East peace process. The involvement of Arab States, under the banner of the Arab Peace Initiative, is crucial for the advancement of regional peace.

It is heartening that President [Mahmoud] Abbas and Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert have begun regular discussions on the major issues. Meetings between their negotiating teams have also begun. The Quartet agreed to meet regularly to review progress and provide support for the parties' efforts.

It is also reassuring that, last December, the Paris donors' conference

reinforced broad international support for the renewed peace process. Eighty-seven Governments and international institutions attended the conference, pledging well over \$7 billion in assistance to the Palestinian Authority. They also welcomed the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan presented by Prime Minister [Salam] Fayyad.

Success in bringing about improvements on the ground is urgently needed to bolster the political process. That is why Quartet Representative Tony Blair has embarked on the task of securing implementation of projects to support Palestinian economic revitalization -- a crucial requirement for building a strong foundation for a future Palestinian State.

But a number of events this year have hindered the progress. Israeli military operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks on southern Israel and settlement expansion, especially in and around East Jerusalem, have all had a negative effect on the renewed political process.

I have repeatedly condemned the firing by Palestinian groups of rockets at civilians. I have also made repeated calls against disproportionate action and for maximum restraint on the part of Israel in its military operations. It is the responsibility of all parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and not to harm civilians.

The decision by Israel to introduce a full closure of the Gaza Strip has cut off an already destitute population of Gaza from vitally needed supplies. The recent breach of the border between Gaza and Egypt showed the degree of desperation among ordinary Gazans, as thousands crossed into

Egypt in search of food and basic daily necessities. I remind Israel of its obligations towards the civilian population of Gaza under international law, including the laws of occupation, which continue to apply to the extent of Israel's control over the territory and its population.

I support the Palestinian Authority's proposal to operate the Gaza crossings. We also have to help restore the unity of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank within the legitimate framework of the Palestinian Authority. This is critical for a viable peace agreement.

While a solution to the conflict must be worked out between the parties themselves, it is important for the international community to remain engaged and focused on its pledge to assist them in their quest for peace.

The United Nations, with some 20 agencies on the ground, will continue to fulfil its responsibility to assist and protect all persons affected by the conflict. I call on donors to follow through on their substantial commitments made in Paris.

My Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Special Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian Authority, Robert Serry, is working closely with the United Nations country team. They are developing programmes aimed at improving the dire living conditions of the Palestinian people.

For my part, I will continue to support the efforts of President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, encouraging them to make tangible progress on all permanent status issues. I will work with my Quartet colleagues and regional partners to promote the implementation of the Road Map and to achieve peace and security for the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, in fulfilment of [Security Council] resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

I extend my gratitude to all of you for the important work of this Committee, and reiterate my full support for the mandate you are here to serve.

VI. UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE CONVENES IN AMMAN

The United Nations seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Amman on 19 and 20 February 2008. The Seminar consisted of three panels that discussed the current constraints and challenges to the Palestinian economic development; proposals and reform plans for achieving a viable Palestinian economy; and mobilizing international assistance in support of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. The seminar was attended by representatives of 51 Governments, 4 intergovernmental organizations, Palestine, 6 United Nations entities, 22 civil society organizations and representatives of academic institutions and the media. Presentations were made by 15 experts, including Palestinians and

Israelis. The following is the statement of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, delivered by Robert H. Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority on 19 February 2008 (SG/SM/11429, PAL/2098):

I am delighted to send greetings to the participants in this United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People.

You meet in the early months of a very important year for the Palestinian people and their long-denied legitimate aspirations for a viable, independent, sovereign, democratic State of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, based on an end of the occupation that began in 1967.

The key ingredients for a breakthrough exist. President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert have launched bilateral negotiations in order to resolve all core issues and achieve a permanent settlement. The Palestinian Authority has launched an impressive reform and development agenda and taken important security measures on the ground, while donors have pledged over \$7 billion to assist. A range of international envoys, including Quartet Representative Tony Blair, have been deployed to ensure that tangible progress is made in implementing Road Map commitments, improving security conditions for both Palestinians and Israelis, and reviving the Palestinian economy.

Yet the harsh realities on the ground, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza, give rise to understandable skepticism among many about the possibilities of peace. The months ahead must see these realities improve, together with progress in the political negotiations. On this, all Quartet members are united, and there is a

determination also to work closely with the countries of the region, based on the Arab Peace Initiative.

In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority's reform and security efforts have provided a basis for moving forward, but much more now needs to be done. I reiterate the United Nations position on the illegality of settlement activity anywhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Road Map requires a freeze on all settlement activity, including so-called "natural growth", and the dismantlement of all outposts erected since March 2001, as well as the reopening of institutions in East Jerusalem. I call for immediate steps to meet these obligations. I also reiterate the importance of further Palestinian Authority efforts on security, building on the steps already taken in Nablus and other West Bank cities. In this context, the case for urgent steps to ease closures in the West Bank, in accordance with existing agreements, is clear. This must happen if the Palestinian economy is to revive, and if donor assistance is to produce long-term results. I also reiterate that the continued construction of the barrier on the Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and that as Secretary-General I will continue to work for implementation of that opinion.

The current situation in Gaza is unsustainable in humanitarian, human rights, security and political terms - for the Palestinians, Egypt and Israel too. The

ongoing crisis in Gaza also undermines the Annapolis process. I deplore the all-too-frequent breaches of international humanitarian law - including rocket attacks against civilians, excessive uses of force in civilian areas, and collective punishment of the civilian population. It is vital that Israel ceases actions of collective punishment, and allows all legitimate and necessary humanitarian and commercial supplies to reach the population. We must work towards resumption of normal economic life for the people of Gaza, including by supporting a resumption of stalled United Nations and other projects in Gaza, and the reopening of crossings as envisaged in the Agreement on Movement and Access. I particularly welcome the initiative of the Palestinian Authority to resume control of crossings, and the efforts of Egypt to find workable solutions. I believe this must include an end to rocket attacks, as well as incursions into Gaza, since solutions are unlikely to be sustainable without an atmosphere of calm on the ground.

The many United Nations agencies on the ground including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Food Programme, United Nations Development Programme, World Health

Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund will carry on with their important work, to relieve humanitarian suffering where we must - especially in Gaza - and to support the Palestinian Authority's developments efforts where we can. I urge the international community to heed the Consolidated Appeal launched recently by United Nations and other humanitarian agencies. Let me also renew my call on all donors to continue to invest generously and step up their efforts at supporting Palestinian economic development and capacity-building.

I will continue to remind all parties that international law must be the basis for their actions on the ground, and for any sustainable solution. Only a permanent political settlement, which ends the occupation and gives Palestinians their independence, can fundamentally alter the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and bring lasting security for Israel. While I am well aware of the challenges, I believe that with the right mixture of wisdom, realism and political courage - including a major intensification of efforts in the months ahead - we can make historic progress towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

**VII. BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE
INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
VISITS CAMPS FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN JORDAN**

The following press release was issued on the visit of the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Husn and Irbid Palestine Refugee Camps in Jordan on 21 February 2008 (GA/PAL/1079):

AMMAN, 21 February - "This morning, we saw the real face of Palestine outside of Palestine," the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People told the community leaders at the Irbid camp for Palestine refugees in northern Jordan today, capping the conclusion yesterday of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, in Amman.

Joining Paul Badji of Senegal in a first ever official tour of Palestinian refugee camps by a Committee delegation were the other members of the Bureau: Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz (Cuba) and Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairmen, and Saviour F. Borg (Malta), Rapporteur. The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, joined the ambassadors, along with the Chief of the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights, Yuri Gourov, and the Committee Secretary, Wolfgang Grieger.

Ambassador Badji told the group of some 30 Palestinian community leaders, eager to know what the United Nations could do to help and frustrated at what they perceived was the lack of concrete intervention thus far, that the Committee had known their living situation was unacceptable and that, not only Arab countries had to work to solve the problem, but the entire international community had to help the Palestinians live in dignity and peace, in an independent and sovereign State.

What he had seen this morning had convinced him that - "give Palestinians a State, a nation, and they will surprise the world" - because all the Palestinians he had seen, young and old, were taking care of themselves. What was missing was a

State. "And this Committee is working every day to make that happen. We understand your frustration, but we also know your faith," he said.

The two refugee camps visited today - the Irbid and Husn camps - are both in the area of operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Agency's Field Director for Jordan, Sheldon Pitterman, led the tours, with the aid of additional UNRWA staff. Many of them were Palestinians, who, themselves, had grown up in these camps.

Ten of the fifty-nine Palestine refugee camps in UNRWA's total area of operations are located in Jordan, which has approximately 500,000 refugees. Four of those camps were set up after 1948 on the east bank of the Jordan River, and six after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, which had been under Jordanian administration at that time.

The Husn camp, known locally as Martyr Azmi el-Mufti camp, was one of the six emergency camps established in 1968 for 12,500 Palestine refugees and displaced persons who had left the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The camp is situated 80 kilometres north of Amman. The refugees, initially accommodated in tents in an area of 774,000 square metres, have grown to some 25,000.

To enable the refugees to withstand the harsh winters, the Agency dropped its earlier plans to provide them with stronger tents in favour of prefabricated shelters. As it does at its other camps, UNRWA provides education, health, relief, and social services

at Husn, where it operates nine installations with 167 staff. The delegates visited a women's programme centre, an income-generation project and a refugee family there.

Irbid camp was one of the four established after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Set up in 1951 for 4,000 refugees in an area of 244,000 square metres, the camp's

inhabitants has grown to 24,833 registered refugees. Over the years, the refugees replaced the tents and mud shelters with concrete dwellings. UNRWA's provision of education, health, relief and social services at Irbid is also through nine installations, operated by 185 staff. There, the ambassadors visited a rehabilitation centre, a girls' preparatory school, a health clinic and a camp improvement committee.

VIII. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS BRIEF SECURITY COUNCIL

On 26 March 2008, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian Authority Robert H. Serry briefed the Security Council on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question." At the same meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes briefed the Council on his visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. Below are excerpts from the briefing (S/PV.5846).

Robert H. Serry:

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Palestinian lead negotiator Ahmad Qurei are meeting on a continuous basis. President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert continue their fortnightly meetings. We welcome the determination of the parties to continue those negotiations despite challenges on the ground, and in an atmosphere of confidentiality. The talks need to make tangible progress on all core issues without exception.

I was also pleased to meet United States Lieutenant General William Fraser when he visited the region for the first time to lead United States efforts to monitor the implementation of phase I Road Map commitments, as agreed at Annapolis. I have

offered full United Nations support to the United States-led monitoring process and look forward to regular Quartet consultation on it.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad and his Government continue to promote good governance and revive the economy. Steps this month included addressing electricity subsidies, the finalization of measures to ensure financial transparency and efforts to ensure that Palestinian Authority ministries and agencies develop coordinated and standardized project proposals. ...

Efforts to improve the security performance of the Palestinian Authority continue. Palestinian security forces carried out operations against militants in several West Bank cities. ...

However, the security situation for both Israelis and Palestinians remains a matter of deep concern. One Israeli has been killed and 27 injured by Palestinian militants. Forty-five Palestinians have been killed and 139 injured during Israeli incursions into Gaza and the West Bank. I am particularly alarmed at the number of incidents on both sides where children are being killed or injured.

On 4 February, a suicide attack in Dimona by two bombers from Hebron, for which Hamas claimed responsibility, killed one Israeli and injured six others. Over 320 rockets and mortars have been fired from Gaza, with the town of Sderot again coming under particular attack. ...

Corporal Gilad Shalit of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is in his twentieth month of captivity in Gaza, and Hamas continues to deny the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to him. We call for access to be provided and for his release.

Over 10,000 Palestinian prisoners remain in Israeli prisons. President Abbas has appealed for further Palestinian prisoner releases, building on the steps already taken in that regard.

Israeli military operations into Gaza and the West Bank have continued throughout the reporting period. There have been several instances in which civilians have been killed or injured - including last Saturday, when three civilians were killed by a ground-to-ground missile fired into Beit Hanoun. Even if not intended, such casualties are deplorable and should be the subject of transparent investigation and accountability measures. ...

Citing security concerns, the IDF is also continuing operations in the West Bank.

Those actions undermine the Palestinian Authority's own security efforts. Improved IDF cooperation with the Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank is crucial.

In that context, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported that there are 580 obstacles to Palestinian movement in the West Bank, a level that has stayed steady for many months, and has even increased, despite Palestinian Authority security efforts and Israeli pledges to remove obstacles. Closure levels must be reduced significantly if the Palestinian economy is to revive and if donor assistance is to produce long-term results.

Phase I of the Road Map, to which the parties recommitted at Annapolis, requires the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including "natural growth", and to remove all outposts erected since March 2001. However, construction continues in settlements throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Tenders for new housing continue to be issued by the Israeli Government, and no outposts have been removed. Continued settlement activity is illegal anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territory and is an obstacle to peace. I should also inform the Council that settlement expansion was cited by several Palestinian and Arab interlocutors as among the biggest factors undermining confidence in the Annapolis process and prospects for a viable Palestinian State.

In the same vein, and despite the Road Map obligation to re-open Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, an order was recently issued by the Israeli Government continuing their closure for a further six months. Israel should demonstrate with concrete and urgent steps its commitment to

phase I of the Road Map, as called for by Quartet principals when they last met in Paris.

Construction work on the barrier continues within occupied Palestinian territory, in deviation from the Green Line and contrary to the International Court of Justice advisory opinion.

I now turn to the situation in Gaza, which is unacceptable and also unsustainable in humanitarian, human rights, security and political terms. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs will brief the Council on the severe humanitarian situation in more detail. Several factors have created a dangerous cocktail for Israel, Egypt and the Palestinians, causing deep suffering and damaging prospects for a two-State solution.

...

Despite statements of intent, Hamas has not acted with sufficient determination to bring about an end to rocket attacks by militant groups. Hamas itself also carries out periodic rocket firing and regular mortar fire, to say nothing of the recent suicide bombing. Reports of smuggling continue to be of concern, as are reports of outside militant groups now gaining a foothold in Gaza. We continue to call on Hamas to live up to the responsibilities it has taken on itself and to choose the olive branch over the gun.

However, Israeli measures amounting to collective punishment are also not acceptable. We call on Israel to meet its obligations towards the civilian population of Gaza under international law.

The breach at Rafah at the end of January caused understandable relief in Gaza, as civilians sought basic commodities and a respite from the pressure cooker conditions under which they are forced to live. Egypt moved to re-establish order along the border earlier this month. But the situation remains extremely fragile. Unless addressed, it will remain a danger to the safety, security and well-being of the Palestinian population, to the security of Egypt and of Israel, and to the sustainability of the political process itself. Only yesterday, several thousand people protested against the conditions they face, and the Israel Defense Forces increased its military presence in areas surrounding the Strip.

In the light of these developments, the United Nations has actively made the case with all parties and our Quartet partners that a different and more positive strategy for Gaza is required.

To this end, Quartet envoys are agreed that we should now work towards resumption of normal economic life for the people of Gaza, pursue arrangements that ensure the security of Israel, Egypt and the Palestinians, and support the legitimate Palestinian Authority. Rocket fire and suicide attacks should cease, as should all acts of violence, so that an atmosphere of calm is created. ...

It is therefore of crucial importance now that Israel, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority develop a positive strategy for Gaza designed to achieve those goals. Quartet members, individually and collectively, are ready to provide support for such efforts, including the European Union Border Assistance Mission at Rafah, as appropriate. Egypt's efforts along the border

and diplomatically to find durable solutions to this crisis are to be commended. The Quartet has also stated publicly its strong support for the proposal of the Palestinian Authority to resume operations at the crossings.

...

John Holmes:

...

I found conditions for the people of Gaza grim and miserable, and far from normal. Eight months of severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people entering and leaving the territory, following the Hamas takeover in June 2007, have taken a heavy economic and social toll, coming on top of years of difficulty and economic decline. Whilst the most basic humanitarian goods, particularly food aid, have mostly continued to struggle through, other imports have been progressively closed off, including critical spare parts and raw materials such as cement. Only about 10 per cent of what went into Gaza in January 2007 was allowed to enter in January 2008. In addition, in October, Israel started to reduce the flow of industrial diesel used to operate the single power station in Gaza. In February, the amount of electricity supplied to Gaza from Israel was also reduced. Since June 2007, the movement of Palestinians in and out of Gaza has been virtually impossible, apart from the short period when the Rafah wall was down, and with limited exceptions made for urgent medical cases, pilgrims, those with student and work visas and foreign residence documentation.

The consequences are increasingly severe and visible. Almost 80 per cent of the population are now receiving food aid; most industry and agriculture has collapsed,

raising unemployment and poverty to new heights; frequent and lengthy power cuts severely impair the functioning of essential services and infrastructure; water quality is declining rapidly, where water is available at all; the inadequacies of the sewage system are increasingly exposed, with a real risk of a sewage lagoon at Beit Lahiya collapsing; the medical and education systems are teetering on the edge of failure, as lack of equipment, spare parts and qualified staff, and psychological strains, undermine their functioning.

Vulnerability of the weakest to disease is rising, notably among children, who make up more than half of the population of Gaza. For instance, in October 2007 the number of children under the age of 3 diagnosed with diarrhoea increased by 20 per cent compared to the previous year, and anaemia among children is up by 40 per cent. This bleak situation is further compounded by bureaucratic difficulties between the Palestinian Authority and those administering health care, for example, in Gaza.

The Israeli Government has said that, while there are security concerns about the crossing points themselves, which have been fired on and through which attempts have been made to smuggle arms and potential bombers, the main motivation for the restrictions is the continuing firing of Qassam rockets from Gaza. My visit to Sderot, which has been the target of more than 4,300 rockets since 2004, brought out the physical and psychological damage to the population there from this constant barrage. These crude rockets are aimed at hurting civilians and clearly constitute terrorism. Their continued firing is completely unacceptable and must be halted unconditionally. Hamas, which claims to govern the Gaza Strip, must accept its full

share of responsibility for the suffering in Gaza. Above all, it must act to stop these rockets immediately.

However, I also made clear publicly and privately my view that, whatever the provocation and illegality of the rockets, the effective Israeli isolation of Gaza is not justified, given Israel's continuing obligations to the people of Gaza. It amounts to collective punishment and is contrary to international humanitarian law. Moreover, it does not appear to be having the desired effect, either in halting the rockets or in weakening Hamas's position among the people of Gaza, or more widely. Only those who want to see further radicalization can be happy with the present situation.

Meanwhile, the consequences for civilians on both sides are dramatic, not only through the imposed restrictions and the continuous firing of rockets, but also through the resulting repeated incursions into and military clashes inside Gaza, which cause many civilian casualties, however unintended they might be. The fundamental principles of distinction between combatants and non-combatants and of proportionality in attacks during the conduct of hostilities must be respected by all sides.

The current situation in Gaza is not sustainable and is extremely damaging to the prospects for the current peace process. Only political efforts can change this dynamic. Meanwhile, from a humanitarian point of view, while a return to the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access is what is really needed, I pressed the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority at least to ensure that more humanitarian and other goods are allowed in, on a more predictable and systematic basis. I made the same message clear to Hamas in what I said publicly.

This means reopening the crossings and establishing better mechanisms for identifying and addressing the fundamental needs of the population. In particular, I asked that the materials necessary for the restart of \$213 million worth of frozen humanitarian United Nations projects, in areas such as sanitation, housing, education and health, be allowed in by Israel and that spares and equipment for medical and sanitation services be given priority. There were some indications that the Israeli authorities are willing to respond positively to these requests.

...

The combination of the construction of the barrier, the steady expansion of the settlements, all still illegal, and the now 580 separate checkpoints and blockages within the West Bank is fragmenting communities. It seriously impairs the access of tens of thousands of people to their lands and to essential services, not least medical services. Severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people are affecting economic growth, as well as increasing poverty and food insecurity and reducing health standards. They further threaten the viability of a future Palestinian State.

...

Israel has legitimate security concerns and a right and duty to defend its citizens. But even in such circumstances, security cannot override all other concerns or justify so much damage to ordinary people's livelihoods and infringements of their human dignity and human rights. Israel has obligations towards the Palestinian population under occupation. I therefore pressed the Israeli authorities to begin implementing their commitments to ease at least some of the restrictions.

...

Notwithstanding all the difficulties, the humanitarian community will continue to do all it can to respond to the moral imperative of saving and improving lives and preserving human dignity. ...

Meanwhile, I also appeal to the donor community to continue to respond generously to what has now become the third largest annual consolidated appeal for

humanitarian funds, after Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, I appeal to the Security Council to continue to speak up about the consequences for civilians, in both the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, of what is happening and about the overriding duty on all sides to comply with international humanitarian law and the resolutions of this Council.

IX. SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES CONCERN AT ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL AND THE GAZA STRIP

On 27 February 2008, the following statement was issued by the Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (SG/SM/11439):

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the loss of civilian life in Southern Israel and Gaza, and at the escalation of violence that has taken place today.

The Secretary-General condemns rocket fire against Israel by Hamas, which intensified today and killed an Israeli civilian in Sderot. He calls on Hamas and other militant groups to cease such acts of terrorism.

The Secretary-General also condemns the killing of four Palestinian children, including an infant, in Gaza in IDF strikes. He calls on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and ensure respect for international humanitarian law so as not to endanger civilians.

These events underscore the urgent need for a calming of violence, and must not be allowed to deter the continuation of the political process.

X. BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The following statement was issued on 29 February 2008 by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (GA/PAL/1080):

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is seriously disturbed by

the escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. During the past two days alone,

31 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, including eight children and one infant. Also, an Israeli in Sderot was killed by a rocket launched from the Gaza Strip. Moreover, while overshadowed by the crisis in Gaza, Israeli military incursions into Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank continue unabated resulting in casualties and arrests.

The military attacks on populated areas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Israeli occupying forces that inevitably cause civilian casualties are in clear violation of international law and must end. The vicious cycle of violence must be broken and a ceasefire put into place.

The Bureau reiterates its position that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory is the main cause of the conflict. Israel, as the occupying Power, should be held responsible for the well-being of the civilian population under its control. The 1.5 million Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip are no exception, with Israel controlling not only all the border crossings but virtually every single aspect of their life. The Israeli Government must immediately lift the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which is causing a serious humanitarian

crisis among innocent civilians, amounting to collective punishment, which is a violation of international humanitarian law. Moreover, the suffering of the population is only strengthening the radical elements in the society.

The Bureau calls on the parties to urgently take steps at appreciably improving the daily lives of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the understandings reached in Annapolis and Paris. It is imperative for the parties to preserve the political momentum gained at the Annapolis Conference. The international community, including this Committee, is doing its utmost to create a climate conducive to the conduct of permanent settlement negotiations. The escalation of violence and military assaults are in stark contrast to these endeavours and can only result in a collapse of the process. The Bureau also calls on the international community, in particular the Security Council of the United Nations, as well as the Quartet, to urgently consider appropriate steps to bring an end to the violence, lift the blockade of Gaza and improve the living conditions of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

XI. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT CONDEMNS ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted on 29 March 2008 a statement on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The statement was transmitted in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General by the Chair of the Coordinating Bureau, the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations (A/62/715, S/2008/152). The text of the statement is reproduced below.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement express their grave concern over the Israeli aggressive escalation against the Palestinian people and the serious deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement strongly condemn the continuing military assaults by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which, since the beginning of the month of February, have resulted in the killing of 76 Palestinians, including 13 children. Such violent and illegal actions have deepened the suffering of innocent and defenceless Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who are already greatly suffering from continued imposition of the crippling Israeli siege and the ensuing humanitarian crisis. Moreover, this violent military escalation by Israel constitutes a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, fuels the cycle of violence and threatens international peace and security as well as the fragile peace process between the two sides.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the international community,

especially the Security Council, to uphold international law and its responsibilities and to act urgently to address this growing crisis. Israel, the occupying Power, is called upon to immediately cease its violations and to abide by all of its obligations under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions as the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people during this critical period. Moreover, it reaffirms its long-standing principled positions calling, inter alia, for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab lands occupied since 1967, the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses the hope that the current dangerous deterioration of the situation will be halted and that positive developments on the ground will be generated to help advance the peace process towards the achievement of these goals and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.