



## DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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### 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:  
<http://unispal.un.org>*

## **I. SECRETARY-GENERAL DEEPLY CONCERNED AT SETTLEMENT EXPANSION**

*The following statement was issued on 2 June 2008 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Press release SG/SM/11610).*

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the recent announcement by the Israeli Government to invite new tenders for construction in Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem. The Government of Israel's continued construction in settlements in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to international law and to its commitments under the Road Map and the Annapolis process, as stressed by the Quartet when it met in London on 2 May.

## **II. UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE CONVENED IN MALTA**

*The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in Qawra, Malta, on 3 and 4 June 2008. Invited to participate in the Meeting were experts on the question of Palestine, including Israeli and Palestinian experts, representatives of States Members and Observer Missions to the United Nations, United Nations system entities, parliamentarians, members of the academic community, representatives of civil society organizations, as well as the media. The Final Document of the Meeting is reproduced below (Press release GA/PAL/1093).*

1. The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Qawra, Malta, on 3 and 4 June 2008. The Meeting was held in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81 of 10 December 2007.

2. The objective of the Meeting was to foster greater support by the international community for the creation of a climate conducive to the advancement of the permanent status negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Participants in the Meeting discussed the impact of the settlement construction on the current political process and the need for the parties to meet Road Map commitments. They also examined the effects of the construction of

the wall in the Occupied West Bank, and the importance of finding a solution to the question of Jerusalem.

3. The participants concurred that the political momentum provided at the Annapolis Conference must not be lost, and that all efforts towards the goal of achieving a final status agreement by the end of 2008 should be supported. For this, the current Israeli-Palestinian negotiations must be sustained by producing tangible results on the ground. Most importantly, obligations under phase I of the Road Map must be implemented by the parties without delay. In this regard, the participants expressed serious concern over Israel's ongoing settlement activity, with the Government continuing to issue thousands of tenders for new housing units in settlements in the West

Bank. The participants also reiterated that the presence of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was illegal under international law and called upon Israel to immediately cease settlement activity, including construction related to “natural growth” and dismantle settlement outposts. Of particular concern was the expansion and consolidation of large settlement blocks in and around East Jerusalem, especially in the so-called “E-1” area. It was observed that the presence of settlements in that area had resulted in severing Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, cutting the West Bank into two parts and prejudging the outcome of the final status negotiations.

4. The participants welcomed steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to reform its security forces and their deployment in Nablus and Jenin in conformity with their obligations under the Road Map. Participants called for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the events of June 2007 to allow for regaining the unity of the Palestinian people as an essential condition for achieving a viable resolution of the question of Palestine. The participants noted that all efforts to achieve a ceasefire should be supported and lead to an immediate cessation of violence. Violence by either side was damaging to the current political dialogue. Negotiations should not be held hostage to the agenda of extremists. At the same time, President Abbas should be given all possible support to continue his quest for a viable two-State solution. The participants deplored the loss of many civilian lives, on both sides but overwhelmingly Palestinian, as a result of routine military operations or targeted assassinations carried out during Israeli incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. They reminded that

Israel, the occupying Power, was obliged under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation and to act within the ambit of international law.

5. The participants were updated on the various aspects of the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its effects on Palestinian communities. The participants recalled the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, which clearly stated that the construction of the wall was illegal under international law and insisted on its removal. Furthermore, they called for the removal of the many barriers and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restoration of the situation before September 2000. They emphasized the need for a more serious action by the international community challenging the presence of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The participants noted that the mandate of the United Nations Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should be given full support and be implemented without delay.

6. The participants agreed that a negotiated solution to the issue of Jerusalem, based on international law, was absolutely critical for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and fundamental for a lasting peace in the whole region. The participants expressed serious concern that the Israeli policies and actions in East Jerusalem included the issuance of demolition orders against Palestinian properties, the forcing out of Palestinian Jerusalemites from the city, and the severing of the city from the rest of the West Bank through the expansion of settlements and the construction of the separation wall. In this connection, the

participants stated that the status of Jerusalem could only be resolved through negotiations and in full accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. The participants recalled Security Council resolution 252 (1968), which stated that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tended to change the legal status of Jerusalem, were invalid and could not change that status.

7. The participants expressed serious concern that Israel was not abiding by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide protection to the civilian population under occupation. The applicability of the Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been repeatedly confirmed by the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, as well as by the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and the International Court of Justice. The participants reiterated that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be found in accordance with international law and based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. The continued support of the international community was crucial for advancing the negotiations, namely, a consistent and sustainable effort by the Quartet and the regional partners with both parties. The Arab Peace Initiative remained an important element for advancing peace in the region and should be seized upon.

8. The participants of the Meeting, hosted by Malta, a European Union member State, appreciated the absolutely critical role played by the European Union and other European States in support of the Palestinian people. They encouraged the policy-making organs of the European Union to play a more active role in various aspects of the political process, in addition to the European Commission's substantial economic assistance.

9. The participants were of the view that national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations had a special role to play in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian political process. Such organizations as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) of the Barcelona Process, the European Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union worked towards upholding international law and promoting an effective political dialogue aimed at resolving all permanent status issues.

10. The participants commended Malta for its proactive and constructive role in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and encouraged its continuation. They learned with appreciation that the delegation of the Committee to the Meeting had met with the President and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta and discussed how Malta and the Committee, respectively, were contributing to efforts at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The participants expressed gratitude to the Government of Malta for hosting the Meeting and the generous hospitality extended to them.

### III. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

*On 10 June 2008 the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 6/19 on religious and cultural rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in which the Council requested the High Commissioner to report to the Council, at its next session, on the implementation of that resolution. The conclusions of the report are reproduced below (A/HRC/8/18).*

58. During the reporting period, the measures adopted by the Government of Israel to restrict freedom of movement of both people and goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory severely impeded the population's access to religious sites, notably in Jerusalem, cultural exchanges and events. The justification for the closure regime repeatedly cited by the Israeli authorities was the need to provide security and protection to all people within its jurisdiction. While the security of the population is undoubtedly an important consideration, the relevant measures should be proportionate to that aim and non-discriminatory in their application. A considerable part of the restrictions were introduced to ensure and ease freedom of movement for the inhabitants of Israeli settlements, which have been established in breach of international law, creating intolerable hardship for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians attempting to exercise their right to freedom of movement inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

59. International humanitarian law requires that the Occupying Power permit ministers of religion to give spiritual assistance to their religious communities. In this regard, Israel should take the necessary measures to ease existing restrictions on local and foreign clergy and allow

unhampered movement and access for spiritual leaders to communicate with members of their faith.

60. The existing rules governing the importation of Arabic literature to the Occupied Palestinian Territory limit the capacity of Palestinians to exercise their right to take part in cultural life by effectively restricting the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences and take part in the cultural achievements of other peoples of the region with whom they share language and culture. The Government of Israel should consider revisiting these rules to assess their proportionality.

61. The freedom to establish seminaries or religious schools and religious, charitable or humanitarian institutions should be fully respected and protected. While restrictions on such institutions might be introduced when necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, any such restrictions must be prescribed by law, applied only for those purposes for which they were prescribed and be directly related and proportionate to the specific need for which they are predicated.

62. As Occupying Power, Israel bears responsibility for the preservation of the cultural and religious heritage in the Occupied Palestinian Territory under international law, and should take positive

measures to preserve this heritage and refrain from action which could negatively affect the sites.

#### **IV. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT CONDEMNS ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES**

*On 17 June 2008, the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, addressed the following letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/396).*

I write to you on behalf of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement with regard to the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in particular with regard to ongoing and intensifying illegal Israeli settlement activities.

In grave violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, in violation of numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and in defiance of the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice and the will of the international community, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to carry out its illegal colonial settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem. Moreover, despite commitments made in the context of the Middle East peace process and agreements reached therein and contrary to the spirit and goals of this renewed peace process, Israel has actually escalated the conduct of such illegal activities in the recent period.

In the past several months, Israel has issued tenders for thousands of new units in Israeli settlements throughout the Occupied

Palestinian Territory and continues to construct and expand its illegal settlements, to build bypass roads to serve those settlements and to maintain settlement “outposts”. At the same time, the occupying Power continues to illegally construct the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, which is intricately correlated with its colonial settlement activities, serving, inter alia, to further entrench the settlements and to facilitate their expansion and the attempts to annex de facto more Palestinian land.

In this connection, Israel continues to carry out countless other unlawful policies and measures intended to advance its illegal settlement campaign and to alter the demographic composition, character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the confiscation of Palestinian land, the destruction of property, including the demolition of Palestinian homes and the razing of agricultural lands, and the imposition of severe and discriminatory residency restrictions and a permit regime.

Such actions not only constitute flagrant violations and grave breaches of international law, but also heighten tensions, further destabilize the fragile situation on the ground and very negatively impact the peace

process involving the two sides. Indeed, these illegal Israeli policies and activities are destroying the territorial contiguity, integrity and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, seriously undermining the prospects for the establishment of a physically viable and contiguous Palestinian State and thus threatening the prospects for achievement of a just and lasting peace settlement with the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement reiterate their condemnation of all of Israel's ongoing illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and stress the dangers of such continuing illegal and unilateral Israeli measures. In this regard, the members of the Non-Aligned Movement urge the Security Council, considering its authority under the Charter of the United Nations and responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, to seriously address this critical issue.

The Security Council has, in the past, taken clear and strong positions deploring Israeli settlement activities and calling for the cessation of settlement construction and the dismantlement of settlements already built in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In light of the serious situation on the ground and the critical status of the peace process, it is incumbent on the Council to once again clearly and seriously address this issue by demanding respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, and respect for all relevant Council resolutions, and reiterating its demands that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately and completely cease all settlement construction, expansion and planning in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Rodrigo Malmierca **Díaz**  
Permanent Representative  
Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau  
of the Non-Aligned Movement

## V. SECRETARY-GENERAL WELCOMES ISRAEL-GAZA CEASEFIRE

*The following statement was issued on 18 June 2008 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Press release SG/SM/11645).*

The Secretary-General welcomes the announced Israel/Gaza cessation of violence.

The Secretary-General hopes that these efforts will both provide security and an

easing of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and end rocket and mortar attacks against Israeli targets. He also hopes that this cessation of violence will lead to a controlled and sustained opening of the Gaza crossings for humanitarian and



commercial purposes. The Secretary-General looks forward to all sides acting with care and responsibility in ensuring that this cessation of violence endures.

The Secretary-General congratulates Egypt on its persistent efforts to achieve calm through this agreement.

## **VI. COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE CONVENES SPECIAL MEETING TO MARK SIXTY YEARS OF DISPOSSESSION OF PALESTINE REFUGEES**

*The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened a Special meeting to mark sixty years of dispossession of Palestine refugees at United Nations Headquarters on 20 June 2008. Invited to the special meeting were representatives of States Members and Observer Missions to the United Nations, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, internationally renowned experts, civil society organizations, as well as the media. The opening statement by the Chairman of the Committee is reproduced below.*

Sixty long years have passed since hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and property as a result of the Arab-Israeli hostilities of 1948. By the time armistice agreements were signed in 1949, Israeli forces had ended up controlling large parts of British Mandate Palestine, areas that became the new State of Israel. The remaining area of the land - the West Bank and the Gaza Strip - was under the control of Jordan and Egypt, respectively. Even worse, the conflict resulted in the mass flight of some 800,000 Palestine refugees leaving behind their homes, land and property. The outcome of the war was mourned as a disaster by the Palestinians, the Nakba.

The United Nations has been involved with the conflict over Palestine from the outset and probably no issue has received as much attention from the Organization. Since 1947, every phase in the unfolding crisis has been addressed in reports of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and other organs, not only marking the events, but in

some cases shaping them. The issue of Palestine refugees became and continued to be a core aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly, in resolution 194 (III), resolved that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.” For six decades, the Palestinian people who fled their homes in 1948 have remained refugees, whose status has been passed from generation to generation. No other refugees in modern history have remained refugees for such a long time, yet their predicament and long-lost justice have received little attention of the international community.

The issue of Palestine refugees is central to achieving the inalienable rights of

the Palestinian people. In 1974, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3236 (XXIX), reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinians people, namely the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property from which they had been displaced or uprooted. Our Committee, which was established the following year, 1975, was mandated to promote the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

Where are Palestine refugees today? Nowadays, the original Palestine refugees and their descendants are estimated to number more than 7 million and constitute the world's oldest and largest refugee population. They include 4.5 million 1948 refugees who are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); 1.5 million 1948 refugees not registered with UNRWA either because they did not register or did not need assistance at the time they became refugees; 950,000 displaced persons from the 1967 war; and 350,000 internally displaced in Israel.

About a third of the refugees still live in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While the life of a Palestine refugee is difficult, it is particularly deplorable in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, refugees have been subjected to the demolition of their homes and confiscation of their land. Confiscated Palestinian land has been set aside for the exclusive use of some 480,000 settlers. Of the homes demolished in the last six months, more than half belonged to refugees. Some 38 per cent of the West Bank is inaccessible to Palestinians. This land was once meant to

form part of a Palestinian State. Over 600 checkpoints or obstacles impede freedom of movement, negatively impacting socio-economic activity and development. The separation wall, illegally built in large parts on Palestinian land, now extends over 57 per cent of its planned 723-kilometre route, confining thousands of Palestinians, and preventing thousands more from entering East Jerusalem. The continuing settlement activity is contrary to international law and Security Council resolutions. The construction of the wall deviates from the Green Line and is contrary to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The severe isolation of the Gaza Strip has brought misery and destitution to the 1.5 million Palestinians living there. Two thirds of them are refugees, many continue to live in UNRWA camps. The humanitarian condition of Gaza residents has become increasingly grave. They are caught between the closure of crossings and Israeli measures amounting to collective punishment. Basic commodities for the population, like food, fuel, medical supplies and equipment, school books, construction materials, farming inputs, and other have barely trickled in. UNRWA had to temporarily suspend its operations for lack of fuel. The typical monthly traffic of 11,000 trucks laden with goods has shrunk to about 2,000. The blockage of the Gaza Strip has worsened poverty, unemployment and longer-term effects such as child malnutrition. At least 80 per cent of Gazans are now fully dependent on food aid and humanitarian assistance. Unrelenting Israeli incursions have resulted in the high number of deaths and injuries among civilians, including women and children. The international community should hold Israel fully responsible for the welfare and

protection of the refugees in the Palestinian Territory it continues to occupy, including the Gaza Strip.

The United Nations has been involved with assisting Palestine refugees since 1948. UNRWA's main purpose is the direct provision of essential public services to Palestine refugees in the Middle East. It provides primary education to some half a million children annually and primary health care to the entire refugee population. Through its hard work, it has eliminated communicable diseases among refugees. UNRWA offers social services, particularly to those rendered vulnerable by poverty, disability and social exclusion. Building homes and replacing those damaged by Israeli forces and a microfinance programme are among other services by UNRWA.

On a personal note, I would like to share with you that I was able to witness the work of UNRWA when a delegation of the Committee visited two refugee camps in northern Jordan during its stay in the country in connection with the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Amman last February. This experience, very moving and emotional at times, helped us better understand and appreciate the work done by UNRWA and the important role of the host countries, namely Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. UNRWA cannot operate without their full cooperation.

On behalf of the Committee, allow me to thank the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Ms. Karen Abu-Zayd, and the dedicated and hard-working staff of the Agency for their important work of alleviating the hardship of millions of Palestine refugees in the region. This important work of the Agency, however, is

often restrained by under-financing. I would also like to use this occasion to appeal to all donors, through their representatives present here, to continue to support UNRWA and be generous in their contributions.

As most of you know, last April, our Committee convened at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees, in order to help assess the situation of the refugees and examine the role of the United Nations in alleviating their plight. The Conference also discussed international efforts at finding an agreed, just and fair solution to the Palestine refugee problem. The final document of that Conference has been distributed by the Secretariat.

Clearly, a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is overdue. Our Committee continues to support the Middle East peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It fully supports the objective of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, as endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003). We have welcomed the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet's road map, calling on the parties to implement them. The Committee has also supported the holding of the Annapolis conference and welcomed the joint understanding reached by the parties.

The Committee has continuously urged both parties to intensify political negotiations and action to improve conditions for both Israelis and Palestinians on the ground, notwithstanding the domestic challenges on both sides. We commend the active role of regional partners for finding political solutions on several fronts, in

support of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. It is important that in the permanent status negotiations the parties seriously focus on all the core issues - borders, settlements, Jerusalem and refugees.

Palestine refugees, by sheer numbers, constitute a significant presence in the region. The resolution of their tragic plight should therefore be paramount in any peace settlement. They have gone through suffering, humiliation and dispossession for

far too long - too long to be paralleled with any other refugee situations in the world. At the start of my statement I said that this special meeting was convened to mark sixty years of dispossession of Palestine refugees. But, in fact, when Palestinians talk about the tragedy of Al-Nakba they always mean the dispossession and deprivation of the entire Palestinian people of their homeland, their property and their identity. Under international law and also on a moral ground, all of us have a responsibility to continue to work toward bringing about a just solution to this problem.

## VII. QUARTET ISSUES STATEMENT

*The following statement was issued on 24 June 2008 by the Quartet representatives meeting on the sidelines of the Berlin Conference in Support of Palestinian Civil Security and the Rule of Law (Press Release SG/2140).*

Representatives of the Quartet - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel - met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet reaffirmed its support for ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and stressed the urgent need for tangible progress towards the shared goal of an agreement by the end of 2008 on the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, and an end to the conflict. The Quartet expressed its commitment to support

the parties in taking and implementing the difficult decisions required in order to achieve these outcomes.

The Quartet underscored the urgent need for more visible progress on the ground in order to build confidence and support progress in the negotiations launched at Annapolis. Israel's removal of some significant West Bank checkpoints and the opening of a number of Palestinian police stations in Area B represent good steps. Greater efforts are required now to project a new reality, including through further urgent steps to improve access and movement. Likewise, Palestinian security performance has improved, including recent efforts in Jenin. Continued Palestinian efforts to fight terrorism and to implement a more comprehensive security strategy are necessary for sustainable long-term improvement. The Quartet urged the parties to build upon these efforts, fulfilling all of

their obligations under the road map and refraining from any steps that undermine confidence or could prejudice the outcome of negotiations. In particular, the Quartet reiterated its deep concern at continuing settlement activity and called on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

The Quartet voiced its support for the outcomes of the Berlin Conference in Support of Palestinian Civil Security and the Rule of Law. With its focus on the Palestinian police and justice sector, the conference provided a timely forum to re-focus and direct international support efforts towards two key sectors of Palestinian state-building. The Quartet called for speedy implementation of projects agreed and robust donor support in order to build the capacity of the Palestinian police and justice sector. The Quartet urged Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in that respect, and emphasized the importance of unobstructed delivery of security assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Noting the dire budget situation facing the Palestinian Authority, the Quartet urged all donors who have not fulfilled their pledges, especially the key regional partners, to fulfill their pledges from the December 2007 Paris donors' conference and to urgently provide budgetary support to meet the requirements of the Palestinian Authority government. It looked to the next Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting on 22 September to take stock of progress.

Recalling the centrality of economic development and institutional reform to the success of a future Palestinian State, the Quartet reaffirmed its support for Quartet Representative Tony Blair's efforts, and

congratulated the Palestinian Authority on the success of the meeting from 21 to 23 May of the Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem. Commending the close cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on this initiative, the Quartet encouraged similar cooperation to break ground on short- and medium-term projects and to make progress in private sector activities that will create jobs for Palestinians and help change the conditions of life. The Quartet underscored the importance of uninterrupted transfers of Palestinian tax and customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority.

The Quartet noted that a lasting solution to the situation in Gaza can only be achieved through peaceful means. The Quartet expressed its continuing support for Egyptian efforts to restore calm to Gaza and southern Israel and welcomed the period of calm that began on 19 June. The Quartet urged that the calm be respected in full and expressed the hope that it would endure, and lead to improved security for Palestinians and Israelis alike, and a return to normal civilian life in Gaza. In this respect, the Quartet looked forward to increased humanitarian and commercial flows through the Gaza crossings under the management of the Palestinian Authority, consistent with the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, and welcomed the European Union's offer to resume its monitoring mission at the Rafah crossing point. The Quartet expressed its strong support for the steady and sufficient supplies of fuel to Gaza and for the immediate resumption of stalled United Nations and other donor projects there. It further tasked the Quartet Representative to develop and promote implementation of measures, in coordination with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to improve conditions in Gaza, as a matter of urgency.

The Quartet welcomed the 21 May announcement by Syria, Israel and Turkey that indirect talks had been launched, with Turkey's facilitation, aimed at achieving peace in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference, and hoped that progress was made in that direction.

The Quartet principals looked forward to meeting again in September at the United Nations General Assembly. On that occasion the Quartet will consider, after further consultations with the parties, the

timing and agenda of an international meeting in Moscow to lend support to the process launched in Annapolis. The Quartet principals will also continue their dialogue with members of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee.

The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

### **VIII. SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS RONALD BETTAUER TO BOARD OF UNITED NATIONS REGISTER OF DAMAGE**

*The following statement was issued on 27 June 2008 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Press release SG/A/1141-PAL/2100).*

In compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution ES-10/17 (2007), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has decided to appoint, in his personal capacity, Ronald J. Bettauer (United States) as one of the three members of the Board of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. Bettauer, a prominent international expert in all aspects of damage claims processing and registration, will replace Michael Raboin, who died tragically in April. The Board is expected to pursue its mandated work next month in a meeting at the Register of Damage's Headquarters in Vienna.

### **IX. DIRECTOR OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC DIVISION OF DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL**

*On 27 June 2008, the Security Council met to consider "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". The Director of the Asia and the Pacific Division of the Department of Political Affairs, Lisa Bittenheim, briefed the Council on the latest developments in the region. The following are excerpts of the briefing (S/PV.5927).*

There have been positive though fragile developments in the Middle East this month. On other issues, progress has not been sufficient.

I turn first to the situation in and around Gaza. Thanks to Egypt's efforts over the past several months, a cessation of all acts of violence began at 6 a.m. on

Thursday, 19 June. Egypt's engagement is a sign of the active role that regional countries are playing in pursuing diplomatic solutions to the region's problems, a role which we warmly welcome.

While calm prevailed for several days, on 24 June Palestinian militants fired one mortar and three rockets at southern Israel, resulting in the injury of two Israeli civilians. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, stating that it was in response to the killing by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of one of its members in the West Bank. In addition, a Palestinian farmer was injured in Gaza by IDF fire on 23 June and, in a separate incident, another farmer was reported injured by IDF fire on 25 June. On 25 June, another rocket was fired from Gaza at Israel, and today two mortar shells were fired. In response to the rockets, Israel has closed the border crossings for the past three days.

In the reporting period, before the ceasefire, Palestinian militants had launched 125 rockets and 149 mortars at Israel and at Gaza crossings. These, as well as clashes with IDF soldiers operating in Gaza, resulted in the death of one Israeli civilian and in the injury of another 12 civilians and four IDF soldiers. On 12 June, direct mortar hits by militants on the Erez crossing terminal caused significant damage and led to the closure of the terminal for a number of days. This attack followed an explosion in Gaza caused by Palestinian militants, which killed eight Palestinians, among them a four-month-old baby, and injured 40 others, including 21 children. Also prior to the beginning of the ceasefire, IDF conducted 25 air strikes and a number of land incursions into the Gaza Strip. Thirty Palestinians, including at least six civilians,

two of them children, were killed and 53 others, including at least 25 civilians, five of them children, were injured.

I reiterate here the United Nations condemnation of all deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on civilians and crossings, as well as any disproportionate or excessive use of force. We underline, as the Quartet did when it met in Berlin three days ago, the importance of the calm being respected in full.

The Quartet noted that a lasting solution to the situation in Gaza can be achieved only through peaceful means. It stressed that it is vital that there be improved security for Palestinians and Israelis alike and a return to normal civilian life. Conditions are extremely grave and need urgent attention. While we are encouraged by the approximately 30 per cent increase in the number of truckloads of supplies into Gaza between 22 and 24 June, there has been no change in the type of commodities allowed in. As noted earlier, on 25 June, Israel closed all commercial crossings in response to the firing of rockets on 24 June, and extended the closure in response to the rocket fired two days ago.

Reports indicate that some industrial fuel was delivered today, although fuel restrictions continue to leave the Gaza power plant operating at 70 per cent capacity. While fuel imports increased slightly since mid-May, the supply of diesel and petrol was, respectively, 50 per cent and 13 per cent of the actual needs. Consequences include major restrictions on the water supply, the use of vegetable oil to run vehicles, the daily accumulation of 600 tons of rubbish on the streets and the dumping of 77 million litres of raw or

partially treated sewage into the Mediterranean Sea every day.

The Quartet has expressed its strong support for the steady and sufficient supply of fuel to Gaza and for the immediate resumption of stalled United Nations and other donor projects there. The Quartet further tasked its Representative Tony Blair with urgently developing and promoting the implementation of measures, in coordination with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to improve conditions in Gaza. It also looked forward to the sustained and orderly reopening of the Gaza crossings under the management of the Palestinian Authority and welcomed the readiness of the European Union to resume its monitoring mission at Rafah within the framework of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

We encourage the parties to intensively pursue discussions under Egypt's auspices to secure the release of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. A letter from Gilad Shalit to his parents was passed by Hamas to representatives of former United States President Carter on 9 June, but the International Committee of the Red Cross has still not been granted access to him after two years in captivity. We also hope that the issue of Palestinian prisoners will be addressed seriously.

We bring to the Council's attention the 5 June statement of President Abbas, made after extensive internal consultation, calling for the holding of a comprehensive national dialogue in order to implement the Yemeni initiative on Palestinian reunification. We hope that such dialogue can support the calm in Gaza and the sustained reopening of the crossings, and make progress towards

the goal of reunifying Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority.

Efforts to advance the Annapolis process have continued this month. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas met on 2 June, and meetings have continued between the chief negotiators, Foreign Minister Livni and Palestinian negotiator Qurei. United States Secretary of State Rice held a trilateral meeting with them when she visited the region on 15 and 16 June, and again in Berlin two days ago. While important issues are under discussion, it is apparent that gaps remain. However, the parties are committed to the process and continue to maintain the confidentiality that has characterized their efforts to date. The Quartet has expressed its commitment to support the parties in taking and implementing the difficult decisions that must be made in order to achieve an agreement by the end of 2008.

During her visit to the region, Secretary Rice also hosted a trilateral meeting with Israeli Defence Minister Barak and Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad to discuss the implementation of road map commitments, as well as continued efforts to improve security and promote movement and access for Palestinians in the West Bank.

Construction activity in Israeli settlements across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, continued during the reporting period, and new activity has been announced. The Secretary-General has stressed that continued construction by the Government of Israel in settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory is contrary to



international law and to Israel's commitments under the road map and the Annapolis process. He urges Israel to heed the call of the Quartet, repeated in Berlin, to freeze all settlement activity, including that associated with natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. We also continue to be concerned about incidents of settler violence.

Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem remain closed by Israeli order. Construction on the barrier continues in the occupied Palestinian territory, in deviation from the Green Line and contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Palestinian security forces have continued to take action to disarm and arrest militants in the West Bank, in furtherance of road map commitments. The recent deployment of Palestinian security forces in Jenin has produced encouraging results. In Nablus, security forces are enforcing law and order. Palestinian security operations are also taking place elsewhere in the West Bank. The international community offered support for the further development of the Palestinian security sector and judiciary on 24 June at the Berlin conference on Palestinian civil security and the rule of law, convened by Germany.

It is also encouraging that Israel has facilitated the reopening of 12 Palestinian police stations, out of the total 20 agreed upon in May, and that it has agreed to grant amnesty to 14 members of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade being held under Palestinian custody. However, we note with concern an IDF raid into Nablus on 24 June, which was launched with no prior contact with the Palestinian Authority security forces deployed in the area and which killed

two Palestinians, including a member of Islamic Jihad. Improved Palestinian security performance will be sustainable only through intensified Israeli-Palestinian cooperation with regard to the discharge of Palestinian security obligations, including the curbing of Israeli incursions into areas where Palestinian forces are operating and unobstructed delivery of security assistance to the Palestinian Authority, as called for by the Quartet.

In the West Bank, three Palestinians, including one alleged militant, were killed by IDF, and 126 others, including 17 children, were injured during the reporting period.

Quartet Representative Tony Blair continues to follow up on the set of measures he announced in May designed to allow greater movement of people and goods and help the Palestinian economy to grow.

Since the beginning of June, IDF has removed approximately 20 obstacles to movement and established two new ones. With the exception of one, which blocked access from a Palestinian village in Hebron to a main road, the obstacles removed were found to be of minor or no significance. The total number of obstacles in the West Bank is approximately 602.

New procedures applied to the movement of United Nations agencies in the West Bank - including searches of United Nations property, the refusal to accept United Nations identifications and requiring Palestinian United Nations staff to walk across crossings - are causing increased operational concerns to our staff on the ground. In Gaza, UNRWA and other United Nations agencies face significant challenges

to their operations. For example, UNRWA is currently negotiating the entry of paper for school textbooks.

Turning to the economic situation in the Palestinian Authority, Prime Minister Fayyad's Government has established a well-monitored and well-controlled fiscal regime. However, the two basic assumptions underpinning the macroeconomic framework - namely, easing of movement and access restrictions and the rate of implementation of donor-funded projects - have not been addressed fast enough. Accordingly, macroeconomic expectations may have to be revised downwards. On the revenue side, an unjustified delay in the transfer by Israel of clearance revenues in May, as well as a unilaterally decided deduction, led to a postponement in salary payments and made the Palestinian Authority's budget planning more difficult.

It is crucial that countries step up their commitments and transform some of the project pledges made at the international donor conference in Paris in December into budget support. This was underlined by the Quartet in Berlin, which looked to the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, to be held in New York on 22 September, as an opportunity to take stock of the progress being made.

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On 23 June, an international conference on the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp took place in Vienna, where donors pledged an initial amount of \$112 million. In his message to the conference, the Secretary-General encouraged the Government of Lebanon to continue the commendable efforts that it has made since 2005 to improve living

conditions for Palestinian refugees. He stressed the need for a just and fair solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere, in the framework of a comprehensive peace process in the Middle East. We thank the Government of Austria for hosting the conference and all donors who have contributed so far for their generosity and commitment, and we urge all others to remain engaged in the reconstruction process.

It is clear that progress has been made on several fronts compared with this time 12 months ago. The goal of Annapolis remains a peace agreement by the end of the year, and the parties and the international community remain committed to this. We also welcome the ceasefire in Gaza, which needs to be sustained and built on during that same period.

To turn those fragile, but real, opportunities into genuine progress, the bilateral negotiations need to find common ground on the core issues. Measures to support the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian economy in the West Bank must be intensified, including by donors fulfilling pledges for budgetary support and by Israel easing closures. Road map obligations need to be acted upon, particularly an Israeli settlement freeze. Palestinian efforts on security performance and reform should continue and be supported. The calm in Gaza needs to be respected by all concerned and to be supported with improved socio-economic conditions and efforts to solve outstanding issues, so that there can be an orderly reopening of crossings under the Palestinian Authority. Internal dialogue to that and broader ends should be fostered.

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