



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

July 2008

Volume XXXI, Bulletin No. 7

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

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I. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS BULLDOZER ATTACK IN JERUSALEM

On 2 July 2008, the Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/11672):

The Secretary-General condemns today's attack in Jerusalem, in which several people died and many were injured. He

sends his condolences to the families of those killed and wishes those injured a speedy recovery.

II. SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS DEBATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 22 July 2008, the Security Council held an open debate on the "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question." Following are excerpts from the briefing on the issue given by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe (S/PV.5940):

During a month that saw a number of encouraging developments across the Middle East, we are particularly heartened by the progress in Lebanon, where a major step forward was taken with the announcement of a national unity Government. It is also positive that the indirect talks between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continue. In Gaza, the ceasefire has held and there was a marked decline in violence. We are concerned, however, about the lack of improvement in the situation on the ground in the West Bank.

The political process begun at Annapolis continues, with regular meetings and discussions of the core issues taking place at various levels, both in the region and elsewhere. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas held a meeting on the margins of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean on 13 July. They underscored their determination to make progress and reach an agreement. However, some significant gaps reportedly remain, and in discussions with Prime Minister Olmert and

President Abbas in Paris, the Secretary-General emphasized the need to press ahead with bilateral talks with the goal of overcoming all outstanding differences. It is nevertheless encouraging that today, for the first time, Israeli President Peres hosted President Abbas in his residence in Jerusalem.

In Gaza and Israel, the security situation has improved, as the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire that entered into effect last month has generally been upheld. During the reporting period, one Palestinian civilian was killed by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) near the Gaza-Israel border, and two others were injured. Palestinian militants fired 7 rockets and 10 mortars at Israel, which resulted in no casualties. No IDF air strikes or incursions were reported. Hamas is communicating to the public in Gaza its support for the calm and has detained individuals involved in firing mortars. However, 9 Palestinians were killed and 29 injured by internal violence, reckless handling of weaponry and tunnel collapses along the Gaza-Egypt border.

Building on the ceasefire, Egypt continues to work on an agreement to exchange the captured Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, for a number of Palestinian prisoners currently held by Israel. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has still not been provided with access to Corporal Shalit after more than two years in captivity.

I am pleased to report that the number of truckloads entering the Gaza Strip through the Sufa and Karni crossings increased by 54 per cent during the four weeks following the ceasefire, as compared to the month before. Imports of cement increased substantially and met Gazan requirements for the reporting period. There has generally been a slight increase in the import of non-food commodities. We welcome that improvement, but note that current import levels stand at approximately 30 per cent of the level before June 2007. The continued lack of many raw materials and the prohibition against exports preclude any significant economic recovery. Approximately 95 per cent of local industrial establishments remain closed.

On 17 July, Israeli officials informed their counterparts in the Palestinian Authority that they would increase the amount of fuel being allowed into Gaza. That is encouraging and necessary, as the amount of fuel has remained substantially lower than the actual needs. Between 27 June and 20 July, only 17 per cent of daily needs of petrol, 57 per cent of diesel, 40 per cent of cooking gas and 81 per cent of industrial gas requirements were met. The Gaza Electricity Company continues to operate at less than 70 per cent of its full capacity. The hardships caused by that policy have been reported in past briefings.

United Nations Special Coordinator Serry visited the Gaza Strip on 10 July to explore suitable ways to resume stalled projects, including United Nations projects, as requested by the Quartet. The United Nations has asked the Government of Israel to facilitate the resumption of priority projects as a matter of urgency, and Prime Minister Olmert, in his discussions with the Secretary-General, has undertaken to consider that matter carefully.

President Abbas continued wide-ranging consultations on the basis of his 5 June speech, which called for national dialogue to implement the Yemeni initiative. Both the Secretary-General and Special Coordinator Serry have underlined their support for President Abbas' initiative for progress towards the goal of reunification of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority. The members of the League of Arab States will have a leading role to play in facilitating such efforts.

In Gaza, it is critical to accelerate progress on the ground in the West Bank. In this connection, we note with concern that Israeli forces have stepped up their military operations throughout the West Bank since 19 June. The IDF closed down and seized equipment of alleged Hamas-affiliated institutions in Nablus, including schools, medical centres, media outlets and civic associations. Israel has outlawed 36 international non-governmental organizations, charging them with fundraising for Hamas. Israeli troops raided the Nablus municipality, arrested elected Palestinian Authority officials and ordered the closure of Nablus' main shopping mall.

Palestinian Authority officials, including Prime Minister Fayyad, have criticized those operations as undermining the economy and the Authority's efforts to improve security in the West Bank. Palestinian security forces have continued their efforts to impose law and order and to disarm and arrest militants, in compliance with Palestinian obligations under phase I of the road map. We are concerned about the effects of Israeli raids on the efforts of Palestinian security forces to operate effectively in areas under their control.

On 2 July, three Israeli civilians, including two women, were killed and 30 others injured, when a Palestinian from East Jerusalem used a bulldozer to attack vehicles in West Jerusalem. The Secretary-General condemned that attack. This morning, as I am sure the Council is aware, a similar attack took place again, resulting in the injury of two Israelis.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, three Palestinians, including one civilian, were killed by the IDF, and 136 others were injured, including at least 22 children. Most of the injuries occurred during anti-barrier demonstrations and were caused by rubber bullets and tear gas. On three occasions since mid-June, Israeli settlers are reported to have fired a total of six rockets towards the Palestinian villages of Burin, south-west of Nablus. On 12 July, Israeli police arrested a settler suspected of manufacturing and launching those projectiles and seized explosives and weapons in the settlement of Yizhar. Subsequently, on 21 July, another rocket was fired from the settlement.

Construction activity in Israeli settlements across the West Bank, including

in East Jerusalem, has continued in the reporting period, and on 3 July, it was reported that Defence Minister Ehud Barak had approved construction for a new building in the Beit Romano settlement in Hebron's old city.

As the Secretary-General has stressed many times before, Israeli construction in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to international law and contrary to Israel's commitments under the road map and the Annapolis process. He urges Israel to heed the clear call of the Quartet to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

Across the West Bank, a slight deterioration in movement and access has been observed, at a time when we had hoped for improvement. Four significant obstacles that had been removed during June were reinstalled by the IDF in July, bringing the total number of closure obstacles to 609. In addition, Israel is renovating the Wadi Nar or Container checkpoint, controlling movement from the north to the southern part of the West Bank, rather than honouring its prior commitment to remove it.

A recent report by the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs confirmed that 56 per cent of the planned route of the barrier has now been constructed. The majority of the construction deviates from the Green Line and is therefore contrary to the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The report found that only 20 per cent of farmers in the northern West Bank, who

used to farm their land west of the barrier, are being issued permits by the Israeli authorities to access their land. This increases dependency on food and humanitarian assistance and it is undermining livelihoods as well.

Let me turn now to the Palestinian economic situation. Owing to budget shortfalls this month, the Palestinian Authority barely managed to make salary payments for June. It plans to pay July salaries through loans and donor aid, but will need an additional \$600 million in order to stay solvent from August through December - excluding aid for development projects. We urge all donors who have not yet fulfilled their pledges at the December 2007 donors' conference to provide budget support in order to avert a financial crisis.

The Chair of the Paris Conference, France, and the three co-chairs, Norway, the European Commission and the Quartet representative, met on 7 July to discuss developments since the donor conference in December 2007. A meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is scheduled to be held in September on the margins of the General Assembly.

...

The reduction of violence in Gaza is a significant, but fragile, achievement. We hope that this calm can be sustained and, together with internal Palestinian dialogue, lead to other positive steps: the return of the legitimate Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip, the reopening of the crossings, the release of Gilad Shalit and a number of Palestinian prisoners and the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority on a basis that allows the peace process to move forward.

We are encouraged by the determination of the parties to continue negotiations within the Annapolis framework, and by the active role of the United States and other members of the international community. The Quartet will meet in September here in New York and in the period between now and then it is important that progress continue. It is vital that there are visible improvements in the situation on the ground, in the consolidation of the ceasefire in Gaza and in improved conditions in the West Bank.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Secretary-General remains committed 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).

III. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ADOPTS TWO RESOLUTIONS

At its 2008 substantive session held in New York from 30 June to 25 July, the Economic and Social Council adopted on 23 July a resolution entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women" (resolution 2008/11), by 25 votes to 2, with 17 abstentions. The Council also adopted on 25 July a resolution entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the

Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” (resolution 2008/31) by 49 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions. The two resolutions are reproduced below:

**2008/11
Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,

Recalling also its resolution 2007/7 of 24 July 2007 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

Recalling the importance of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, on women and peace and security,

Noting the resumption of bilateral negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis, and expressing the need for the speedy achievement of a final and comprehensive peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

Concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods and the many severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations in and sieges of civilian areas, in particular in the Gaza Strip, which have impacted detrimentally their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by them and their families,

Stressing the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

Taking note of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 31 August 2005 regarding Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints, and expressing grave concern at the increasing difficulties faced by pregnant Palestinian women owing to a lack of appropriate and timely antenatal, delivery and post-natal care due to the obstruction of access to proper medical care,

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

Recalling also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Expressing its condemnation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

Expressing grave concern over the increased difficulties faced by Palestinian women, including the sharp increase in poverty, soaring unemployment, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health and education standards as a result of the deterioration in the economic and social conditions on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

Emphasizing the importance of increasing the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to support the resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for intensified measures to be taken for the tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and encourages all women in the region to take an active role in supporting the peace process;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907 and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, to promote their development in various fields and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-third session, a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

2008/31

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 62/181 of 19 December 2007,

Recalling also its resolution 2007/26 of 26 July 2007,

Guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations affirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and recalling relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 252 (1968) of 21 May 1968, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980 and 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981,

Recalling the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, including ES-10/13 of 21 October 2003, ES-10/14 of 8 December 2003, ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 and ES-10/17 of 15 December 2006,

Reaffirming the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967,

Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan,

Stressing the importance of the revival of the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) of 19 March

1978, 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002, 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003 and 1544 (2004) of 19 May 2004 and the principle of land for peace as well as compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people,

Reaffirming the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, and expressing concern in this regard about the exploitation of natural resources by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan,

Convinced that the Israeli occupation has gravely impeded the efforts to achieve sustainable development and a sound economic environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and expressing grave concern about the consequent deterioration of economic and living conditions,

Gravely concerned in this regard about the continuation of settlement activities by Israel and other related measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions,

Gravely concerned also by the serious repercussions on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people caused by Israel's construction of the wall and its associated regime inside the Occupied

Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and the resulting violation of their economic and social rights, including the right to work, to health, to education and to an adequate standard of living,

Recalling in this regard the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, and stressing the need to comply with the obligations mentioned therein,

Expressing grave concern at the extensive destruction by Israel, the occupying Power, of properties, agricultural land and orchards in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including, in particular, in connection with its construction of the wall, contrary to international law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem,

Expressing deep concern about continuing Israeli military operations and the continuing Israeli policy of closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian personnel and food, medical, fuel and other essential supplies, via the imposition of crossing closures, checkpoints and a permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the consequent negative impact on the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people, which remains that of dire humanitarian crisis, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

Gravely concerned by various reports of the United Nations and the specialized agencies regarding the inordinate rates of unemployment, widespread poverty and severe humanitarian hardships, including food insecurity and rising health-related problems, including high levels of malnutrition, among the Palestinian people, especially children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Expressing grave concern at the increasing number of deaths and injuries of civilians, including children and women,

Emphasizing the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians, and calling for the cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, and all firing of rockets,

Conscious of the urgent need for the reconstruction and development of the economic and social infrastructure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as the urgent need to address the dire humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people,

Commending the important work being done by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the donor community in support of the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, as well as the assistance being provided in the humanitarian field,

Recognizing the efforts being undertaken by the Palestinian Authority, with international support, to rebuild, reform and strengthen its damaged institutions and

promote good governance and emphasizing the need to preserve the Palestinian institutions and infrastructure and to ameliorate economic and social conditions,

Stressing the importance of national unity among the Palestinian people, and emphasizing the need for the respect and preservation of the territorial integrity and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Calling on both parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map in cooperation with the Quartet,

1. *Calls for* the lifting of the severe restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, including those arising from ongoing Israeli military operations, and for other urgent measures to be taken to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip;

2. *Stresses* the need to preserve the national unity and the territorial integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as to and from the outside world;

3. *Demands* that Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed in Paris on 29 April 1994;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to restore and replace civilian properties, vital infrastructure, agricultural lands and

governmental institutions that have been damaged or destroyed as a result of its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

5. *Reiterates the call* for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access of 15 November 2005, particularly the urgent and uninterrupted reopening of Rafah and Karni crossings, which is crucial to ensuring the passage of foodstuffs and essential supplies, including fuel, as well as the unhindered access of the United Nations agencies to and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and expresses deep concern at any actions that threaten the integrity of the border crossings and the distribution of fuel;

6. *Calls upon* all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949;

7. *Reaffirms* the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, and calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, endanger or cause loss or depletion of these resources;

8. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destruction of homes and properties, economic institutions and agricultural lands and orchards in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan;

9. *Also calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to cease the dumping of all kinds of waste materials in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which gravely threaten their natural resources, namely, the water and land resources, and pose an environmental hazard and health threat to the civilian populations, and calls for the further implementation of critical environmental projects, including the sewage treatment plant in the Gaza Strip;

10. *Reaffirms* that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to economic and social development, and calls for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention;

11. *Also reaffirms* that Israel's ongoing construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is isolating East Jerusalem, fragmenting the West Bank and seriously debilitating the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and calls in this regard for full compliance with the legal obligations mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice⁴ and in General Assembly resolution ES-10/15;

12. *Calls upon* Israel to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to facilitate the visits of

Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan whose family members reside in their mother homeland, the Syrian Arab Republic, via the Qunaitra entrance;

13. *Emphasizes* the importance of the work of United Nations organizations and agencies and of the 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;

14. *Expresses its hope* that the resumed peace process will speedily advance to pave the way for the establishment of the independent Palestinian State and the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and stressing in this regard the importance of the Madrid Conference, the

Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the present resolution and to continue to include in the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator an update on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies;

16. *Decides* to include the item entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” in the agenda of its substantive session of 2009.

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES ISRAEL TO FREEZE ALL SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY

On 24 July 2008, the Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/11717):

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about the announcement today of the initial approval by the Ministry of Defence of 20 residential units in the Israeli military post of Maskiyot in the West Bank. The Secretary-General has stressed many times before that settlement construction or expansion is contrary to

international law and Israel’s commitments under the road map and the Annapolis process. The Secretary-General urges Israel to heed the call of the Quartet to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.