



## 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 EXPRESSES DISMAY OVER CONTINUED DEMOLITIONS, SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY IN EAST JERUSALEM**

*On 3 November 2009, the Spokesman of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/12586):*

The Secretary-General is dismayed at continued Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem, including the demolition of Palestinian homes, the eviction of Palestinian families and the insertion of settlers into Palestinian neighbourhoods. The eviction today of a Palestinian family in East Jerusalem is just the most recent incident.

These actions stoke tensions, cause suffering and further undermine trust. He calls on Israel to cease such provocative actions. He further reiterates his call on Israel to implement its “Road Map” commitments by freezing all settlement activity, including natural growth; dismantling outposts; and reopening Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem.

## **II. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE GAZA CONFLICT (“GOLDSTONE REPORT”)**

*At its 39<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting on 5 November 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/10 entitled “Follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict”. The text of the resolution is reproduced below:*

*The General Assembly,*

*Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,*

*Recalling the relevant rules and principles of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, in particular the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>1</sup> which is applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,*

*Recalling also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup> and the other*

human rights covenants, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>3</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>3</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>4</sup>

*Recalling further its relevant resolutions, including resolution ES-10/18 of 16 January 2009 of its tenth emergency special session,*

*Recalling the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January 2009,*

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>3</sup> See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, including resolution S-12/1 of 16 October 2009,

*Expressing its appreciation* to the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, led by Justice Richard Goldstone, for its comprehensive [report](#),<sup>5</sup>

*Affirming* the obligation of all parties to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law,

*Emphasizing* the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians, and reaffirming the obligation to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflict,

*Gravely concerned* by reports regarding serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed during the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip that were launched on 27 December 2008, including the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission and of the Board of Inquiry convened by the Secretary-General,<sup>6</sup>

*Condemning* all targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure and institutions, including United Nations facilities,

*Stressing* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to prevent impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations and promote peace,

*Convinced* that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the

question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is imperative for the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East,

1. *Endorses* the report of the Human Rights Council on its twelfth special session, held on 15 and 16 October 2009;<sup>7</sup>

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict<sup>5</sup> to the Security Council;

3. *Calls upon* the Government of Israel to take all appropriate steps, within a period of three months, to undertake investigations that are independent, credible and in conformity with international standards into the serious violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law reported by the Fact-Finding Mission, towards ensuring accountability and justice;

4. *Urges*, in line with the recommendation of the Fact-Finding Mission, the undertaking by the Palestinian side, within a period of three months, of investigations that are independent, credible and in conformity with international standards into the serious violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law reported by the Fact-Finding Mission, towards ensuring accountability and justice;

5. *Recommends* that the Government of Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Convention

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<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/12/48.

<sup>6</sup> A/63/855-S/2009/250.

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<sup>7</sup> A/64/53/Add.1.

relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War<sup>1</sup>, undertake as soon as possible the steps necessary to reconvene a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to ensure its respect in accordance with article 1;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to [report](#) to the General Assembly, within a period of three months, on the

implementation of the present resolution, with a view to the consideration of further action, if necessary, by the relevant United Nations organs and bodies, including the Security Council;

7. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*39th plenary meeting  
5 November 2009*

### **III. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS ON ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

*Under General Assembly Agenda item 32, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 6 November 2009 transmitted to the Assembly a report on “Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”, prepared on the basis of material submitted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/64/517). The recommendations of the report are reproduced below:*

#### **Recommendations**

51. The Government of Israel should end the blockade of Gaza, which is having a negative impact on the humanitarian and human rights situation of the civilian population. In particular, the Government of Israel should allow unimpeded access to Gaza for humanitarian aid and the non-humanitarian goods needed for the reconstruction of properties and infrastructure. Israel should also address effectively and immediately the water, sanitation and environmental crisis in Gaza.

52. All parties to the conflict should abide scrupulously by their obligations under

international human rights law and international humanitarian law. All allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations during the reporting period must be investigated by credible, independent and transparent accountability mechanisms, taking fully into account international due process of law standards. Equally crucial is upholding the right of victims to reparation.

53. The Government of Israel should take steps to facilitate freedom of movement for Palestinians in the West Bank. In accordance with the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the wall, it should immediately cease construction of

the wall and dismantle portions already built in occupied territory. Israel should also issue viable zoning plans and a less cumbersome process for issuing building permits in a non-discriminatory manner for all in East Jerusalem and other places in the West Bank. Until such time, the evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes should cease. Victims of forced evictions should also be afforded the possibility of effective redress. Punitive demolitions should cease immediately.

54. Israel, as the occupying power, should ensure that the rights of children are respected. The Government of Israel should take all necessary steps to address concerns raised in the present report with regard to the arrest and detention of Palestinian children, and should ensure that all detentions are conducted in strict compliance with international human rights law, in particular

due process of law standards, with due respect of the vulnerability of children. The Government of Israel should also ensure that all allegations of torture and ill-treatment are promptly and effectively investigated and perpetrators prosecuted. Israel should refrain from discriminating between Israeli and Palestinian children with regard to the age of criminal responsibility. The Government of Israel should ensure that alternative measures to detention are explored and that detention is used only as a last resort.

55. The General Assembly and the international community should actively promote the implementation of the decisions, resolutions and recommendations of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies and special procedure mandate-holders.

#### **IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS**

*Under General Assembly Agenda item 32, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 6 November 2009 issued a report, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan” (A/64/516). The conclusions and recommendations of the report are reproduced below:*

##### **Conclusions and recommendations**

49. The Government of Israel should abide by international legal obligations and its pre-existing commitments as stated in the road map, as well as the repeated calls of the international community, namely, to immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001 and to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, including in occupied East Jerusalem.

50. The Government of Israel should take action to halt attacks by Israeli settlers

against the civilian population of the occupied territory and ensure that a proper investigation is carried out in regard to incidents caused by such settlers and that redress is given to the victims of such violence (see also A/63/519).

51. The Government of Israel should take action to ensure that the labour rights of all Palestinian workers in settlements, including the right to form and join trade unions, are respected. In accordance with article 32, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government of

Israel should protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, such as working on date plantations.

52. The Government of Israel should cease to exploit natural resources, including water, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In particular, the Government of Israel should take steps to halt the damage being caused to the aquifer in the West Bank and, as the Occupying Power, should ensure non-

discriminatory distribution of water resources (see A/64/354).

53. The General Assembly and the international community should actively promote the implementation of its decisions, resolutions and recommendations and those of the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders.

## **V. UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR AND ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE OPENING OF GAZA CROSSINGS**

*On 9 November 2009 the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Maxwell Gaylard, and the Non-governmental organization consortium, the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), issued the following press statement:*

“With winter rains and cold weather now imminent, the people of Gaza are even more desperately in need of construction materials such as cement, roofing tiles and glass to build and repair homes destroyed and damaged in the Israeli military offensive of 2008/2009 (Operation “Cast Lead”), as well as of regular supplies of fuel, electricity and clean water”, said Mr. Gaylard. “The winter will be particularly hard on the children of Gaza, whose capacity to withstand the rigours of a cold wet winter has already been severely undermined by a marked deterioration of basic services and descent into poverty”, he added.

More than two years of blockade coupled with widespread destruction resulting from the “Cast Lead” offensive have caused severe damage to the homes,

roads and utilities of Gaza. This includes tens of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, deterioration and further damage to already fragile and over-loaded water, sanitation and electricity distribution networks and a marked fall-off in the quality of essential services. Intensive discussions which the United Nations has conducted with the Government of Israel for the resumption of suspended building projects, which would provide much-needed housing and social services for the people of Gaza, have not yet yielded any positive outcome.

A total of 1,393 Gazans were killed and more than 5,000 injured during the three-week offensive, leaving communities, families and children fearful and traumatized, many of them living in the

ruins of their homes, virtually destitute, and relying increasingly on the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for daily sustenance. In total, 3,535 homes were destroyed, 2,854 suffered severe damage and 52,900 suffered minor damage. Without repair, winter winds and rain will render damaged homes uninhabitable.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator together with the non-governmental organizations operating in the occupied Palestinian territory call upon the

Government of Israel to facilitate the entry into Gaza, of urgently-needed construction and repair materials, of adequate supplies of industrial fuel for electricity generation, and essential items for the proper functioning of water and sanitation systems. “The people of Gaza share with everyone else the right to dignified lives, free of indiscriminate and prolonged suffering. They should not be subjected to this continuation of collective punishment brought on by the blockade”, said Mr. Gaylard.

## **VI. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR URGES ISRAELI SETTLEMENT FREEZE**

*The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Secretary-General’s Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Robert H. Serry, on 10 November 2009 made the following statement, after Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’ announcement that he would not run for re-election:*

I conveyed to President Abbas the Secretary-General’s strong support for his leadership. But it is clear that this precious asset is now in jeopardy. I believe President Abbas’ announcement last week is a loud and clear wake-up call.

I repeat the Secretary-General’s call for a freeze on all settlement activity. Either we go forward decisively to a two-State solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions, or we risk sliding backwards.

## **VII. SECRETARY-GENERAL TRANSMITS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL THE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE GAZA CONFLICT**

*In a letter dated 10 November 2009 and addressed to the President of the Security Council, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon transmitted to the Council the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (“Goldstone report”). The text of the letter is reproduced below (S/2009/586):*

I have the honour to transmit the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict to the Security Council, pursuant to the request by the General Assembly, contained in paragraph 2 of its [resolution 64/10](#) of 5 November 2009.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.



## **VIII. SECRETARY-GENERAL DEPLORES ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT EXPANSION DECISION**

*The Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 17 November 2009 issued the following statement (SG/SM/12609):*

The Secretary-General deplores the Government of Israel's decision today to expand Gilo settlement, built on Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in the 1967 war.

The Secretary-General reiterates his position that settlements are illegal, and calls

on Israel to respect its commitments under the Road Map to cease all settlement activity, including natural growth. He believes that such actions undermine efforts for peace and cast doubt on the viability of the two-State solution.

## **IX. ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL**

*On 24 November 2009, Mr. Haile Menkerios, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.6223). The following are excerpts from the briefing:*

...

Members of the Council will recall the Quartet's support for President [Barack] Obama's efforts to relaunch negotiations. In furtherance of those efforts, United States Secretary of State [Hilary] Clinton visited the region between 31 October and 4 November and President Obama met Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu in Washington, D.C., on 9 November. However, it has not yet proven possible to resume negotiations.

In the absence of mutual commitments to fully implement Road Map obligations and agreed terms of reference for negotiations, an impasse has developed that must be overcome. A key challenge has arisen from the Israeli Government's proposal to restrain rather than freeze settlement activity. Such restraint would not conform to Road Map

requirements and would reportedly not apply at all in occupied East Jerusalem. The importance of this issue was underscored on 17 November when a Government planning commission approved the addition of 900 housing units to significantly expand the settlement of Gilo on the southern outskirts of occupied East Jerusalem. Furthermore, there were 17 house demolitions carried out in East Jerusalem during the reporting period, including 7 over a two-day period on 17 and 18 November, leading to the total displacement of 99 Palestinians, more than half of whom were children.

The Secretary-General issued a statement deploring Israel's settlement activity. He reiterated that settlements were illegal, called on Israel to implement its Road Map commitments, and underlined that such actions undermine efforts for peace and cast doubt on the viability of the two-

State solution. The Secretary-General separately expressed his dismay at the continuation of demolitions and evictions in Jerusalem. Basing their efforts on well-known Quartet positions, the Quartet envoys are actively engaged on those issues.

On 5 November, President [Mahmoud] Abbas expressed his deep frustration at the political impasse in a televised speech. He stated that he had no desire to nominate himself in the forthcoming presidential elections and indicated that there were other steps he would take in due course. The Secretary-General has been in contact with President Abbas to underline his support for his leadership.

Earlier, on 23 October, in accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law, President Abbas issued a decree calling for presidential and legislative elections to be held on 24 January 2010, at the end of the four-year term of the Palestinian Legislative Council. However, on 28 October, Hamas declared that, in the absence of an intra-Palestinian reconciliation accord, it would not allow elections to be held in Gaza, and made threats against anyone planning to be involved in electoral preparations.

On 3 November, Hamas shut down the Gaza offices of the independent Central Elections Commission. The Commission announced on 12 November that holding elections on 24 January 2010 would no longer be possible. This is deeply regrettable. We hope that it will be possible in the future to hold free and fair elections throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

Throughout this period, Egypt's efforts to secure factional agreement on its proposed reconciliation package continued. This package envisages elections in June 2010. Fatah signed the latest Egyptian proposal on 12 October, while Hamas has so far failed to do so. This, too, is regrettable. We continue to support Egypt's efforts.

The political uncertainty on the Palestinian side has not interrupted continued Palestinian efforts to meet Road Map commitments, pursue economic and security cooperation, and build institutions for statehood. For instance, the Palestinian Authority security forces dismantled two unexploded devices near Jenin on 14 and 18 October. On 15 October, they handed over some 20 pipe bombs confiscated in Nablus to the Israel Defence Forces, which detonated them in a controlled manner. We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to maintain its efforts to improve law and order, fight extremism and end incitement.

In a positive development with significant economic benefits for the West Bank, on 10 November the new Wataniya telecommunications company announced the launch of its commercial services in the West Bank, although the bandwidth required has yet to be released. Also on 10 November, the Jalameh crossing near Jenin was opened for Arab Israelis to cross by vehicle, allowing them to travel to Jenin, thus supporting local businesses and strengthening critical linkages between the West Bank and Israel.

Predictable and free movement and access both within the West Bank and between the West Bank and Israel has

consistently been identified as an important factor for sustained economic development. There are currently 579 movement obstacles in the West Bank, down from 592 in September.

Despite those positive steps, financial challenges remain. As we approach the year's end, the overall projected Palestinian Authority budget deficit for 2009 is estimated at \$1.5 billion, for which there is a projected financing gap estimated at \$350 million. Although some donor funding is anticipated, without additional support, the Palestinian Authority is likely to be forced to resort to further commercial borrowing to meet its obligations. This will place additional pressure on fiscal sustainability in the future.

...

The situation in occupied East Jerusalem underscores the importance of parties refraining from provocations or incitement. In this context, in addition to continued settlement expansion and to the house demolitions in East Jerusalem I have already mentioned, armed settlers attempted on 30 October to take over a Palestinian house in East Jerusalem, leaving four Palestinians injured. On 3 November, a group of armed Israeli settlers escorted by Israeli security forces entered and took control of a Palestinian home in East Jerusalem, claiming legal ownership of the property.

There were renewed confrontations on 25 October around Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount between Israeli security forces and Palestinians who were throwing stones. The clashes left 24 Palestinians and nine Israeli security personnel injured. Twenty-one

Palestinians were arrested. We commend the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in lowering tensions. We remind the Council that Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem remain closed by Israeli order, contrary to Israel's Road Map obligations.

I now turn to Gaza. It is more than 10 months since the conclusion of Operation Cast Lead, but key elements of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) are yet to be fulfilled. We remain worried about the longer-term consequences of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, particularly in terms of deteriorating public infrastructure, environmental degradation and the destruction of livelihoods. During the reporting period, imported truckloads into Gaza mostly consisted of food items and hygiene products, and there were no exports.

To cope with immediate needs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is finalizing a winter response plan, representing the bare minimum required to address the most urgent humanitarian needs for winter, focusing on fuel requirements for the electricity plant; emergency infrastructure items such as sheeting, glass and roof tiles for repairs to houses, schools and clinics; and immediate water and sanitation material, such as water pumps. Full Israeli cooperation will be required to secure the urgent entry of these items.

The Israeli Government has indicated a readiness to facilitate water and sanitation projects. Two desalination units for UNICEF are currently being installed in the Gaza Strip after their entry was approved, but no materials have yet entered Gaza for three other projects whose approval was reported in previous briefings. The United Nations is compiling a comprehensive list of

both urgent and long-term water and sanitation needs, along with material required, which will be presented to the Israeli Government in response to its stated willingness to work in a comprehensive and systematic manner on water and sanitation.

Beyond immediate humanitarian needs and the water and sanitation sector, I regret to inform the Security Council that the United Nations has not yet received a satisfactory response from the Israeli Government to the proposal, put forward in May, to complete \$77 million-worth of stalled projects of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Development Programme in the area of housing units and school and health facilities. The United Nations has left no stone unturned in seeking approval of this package in extensive consultations with the Israeli authorities, and is confident of its capacity to ensure the integrity of programming. It is completely unacceptable that no meaningful progress has been made in kick-starting United Nations civilian construction activities essential to the well-being and recovery of a war- and blockade-affected population, half of whom are children.

According to Israeli Government officials, arms continued to be smuggled and increased-capability rockets have been test-fired from the Gaza Strip, including rockets with a 60-kilometre range capable of reaching Tel Aviv. Egyptian efforts to counter smuggling of such materiel into the Strip have continued. During the reporting period, 12 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza into southern Israel. There were no Israeli casualties. Israel conducted 19 incursions and 9 air strikes on the Strip,

which left 1 Palestinian child dead and 22 Palestinians injured. Five Palestinians are reported to have been killed and 22 injured in accidents involving the collapse of tunnels between Gaza and Egypt.

Within Gaza, on 9 November, Hamas closed down the International Federation of Journalists and public assembly remains severely restricted. On a positive note, practical cooperation between the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Waqf and Hamas in Gaza has so far allowed 2,500 pilgrims to leave Gaza to perform the pilgrimage. An immediate concern is that approximately 750 students in Gaza have been unable to leave the Strip in pursuit of higher education opportunities abroad and are now at imminent risk of losing their places at university, tuition deposits and visas.

Efforts continue to secure the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit, along with a number of the more than 9,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The Secretary-General has continued to reiterate his call for Corporal Shalit's release. Likewise, he has underscored the importance of the release of Palestinian prisoners, as emphasized by President Abbas.

On 5 November, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/10, entitled "Follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict". In accordance with the request contained in the resolution, the Secretary-General transmitted the report of the Fact-Finding Mission to the Security Council on 11 November.

...

The decision of President Abbas not to seek a new term as Palestinian President, in a context of uncertainty over both elections and Palestinian unity, reflects a worrying assessment, from a leader unquestionably devoted to peace, that the political process lacks sufficient content and credibility at this time. This is a loud and clear wake-up call. If we cannot move decisively forward to a final status agreement, we risk sliding backwards, with both the Palestinian Authority and the two-State solution itself imperilled.

Together with Quartet partners, the Secretary-General remains active in seeking a clear strategy on the way forward. He believes that this requires immediate actions on the ground to strengthen the process, a reaffirmation of Road Map requirements and the need for their implementation, and clear terms of reference for negotiations on all core issues that are grounded in the resolutions of the Council and agreements reached between the parties. It is vital at this juncture that the international community take a clear and united position.

## **X. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

*On 30 November 2009, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at United Nations Headquarters, New York, and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, as well as at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Beirut in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977. All States Members of the United Nations, observers and specialized agencies were invited to attend the Special Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. At the meeting, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered the following message (Press Release SG/SM/12635):*

Sixty-two years ago, the General Assembly, in resolution 181, put forth a vision of two States. The State of Israel exists. The State of Palestine does not. The Palestinian people continue to struggle for their inalienable right to self-determination.

The international community continues to assist and protect the Palestinian people, including through the work of United Nations agencies, UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] foremost among them. Such humanitarian efforts are vital, but are not enough. Our paramount focus must be a political solution that addresses the roots of the conflict.

It is vital that a sovereign State of Palestine is achieved. This should be on the basis of the 1967 lines with agreed land swaps and a just and agreed solution to the refugee issue — a State that lives side by side in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders, as envisaged in the resolutions of the Security Council.

I welcome the commitment of Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu and President [Mahmoud] Abbas to a two-State solution, but am deeply concerned that talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have been suspended for almost a year. I support the clear commitment and efforts of the United States

to bring about a resumption of meaningful negotiations on all final status issues, including the security of Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees and Jerusalem.

The biggest challenge to this shared agenda is to create the conditions in which the parties have the trust and confidence to return to genuine and substantive talks.

On the Palestinian side, the Palestinian Authority has made significant progress in meeting its Road Map obligations in the West Bank. I call on all Palestinians to fight violent extremism and to refrain from incitement, and to continue their unyielding struggle to build their own state institutions. These efforts have resulted in economic and security improvements, which should be sustained and extended. I welcome initial steps taken by Israel to contribute to these positive trends, and call on Israeli authorities to expand these measures so that change can become truly transformative.

I am deeply concerned that, in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank, illegal settlement construction continues. I have noted Prime Minister Netanyahu's recent announcement of settlement restraint. While this is a step beyond earlier positions, it falls short of Israel's obligations under the Road Map, particularly given the exclusion of East Jerusalem. I repeat my call on Israel to meet in full its Road Map commitments to freeze all settlement activity, including "natural growth", and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.

In addition, the barrier continues to restrict Palestinian access to key social

services, agricultural land and East Jerusalem. The International Court of Justice has stated that the barrier's deviation from the 1967 line into Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to international law.

I am also concerned about the situation in Jerusalem. Actions such as the evictions of Palestinians and house demolitions, as well as the continued closure of Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem, run contrary to Israel's Road Map obligations. I call on Israel to cease such actions in East Jerusalem, which stoke tensions, cause suffering and further undermine trust, and to reopen Palestinian institutions.

I reiterate my belief that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be negotiated between the parties. As the Quartet has previously stated, unilateral actions cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. Jerusalem should emerge as the capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all.

There remains an urgent need for a durable resolution of the crisis in Gaza. With the arrival of inclement winter weather, the humanitarian situation is of profound concern. The closure of Gaza should be lifted, consistent with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), to allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and people. Consistent with this same resolution, efforts must also be made to address Israel's legitimate security concerns, including through mechanisms to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza and an end to Palestinian rocket fire at Israeli civilians.

Ten months after the end of hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel, the issue of accountability for the many reported violations of international humanitarian and human rights law has not been adequately addressed. I call on both Israel and the relevant Palestinian authorities to conduct, without delay, credible domestic investigations into the allegations of serious human rights violations relating to the Gaza conflict.

The reunification of Gaza and the West Bank is also essential. There can be no two-State solution without a unified Palestinian territory. I support Egypt's efforts in this regard.

Now more than ever, politics must be made credible. Those who try to undermine moves towards peace through violence or by changing facts on the ground must not be allowed to set the agenda.

The United Nations, for its part, will continue to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East through negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. And I will continue to engage all concerned to bring about the end of the occupation and realize the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.