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I. UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND REPORTS ON THE SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, JORDAN, LEBANON AND THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

On 1 June 2011, the United Nations Children's Fund issued a report on the situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic — an assessment based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The introduction to the report is reproduced below.

Introduction

Palestinians represent the world's largest refugee population and one of its longest standing. Military conflict and political turmoil stemming from the Arab-Israeli dispute have forced millions of Palestinians to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, many more than once. The great-grandchildren of the original refugees are now parents to refugee children, a testimony to the duration of the dispute. Sadly, prospects of a just and lasting resolution of the conflict are not yet in sight. The socio-economic hardship in which the Palestinian people have been living, whether it is in the Occupied Palestinian Territory itself or in the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic, is therefore likely to continue to be a serious challenge for the new generation in the foreseeable future.

The lives of Palestinian children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip have been heavily affected by the presence of Israeli occupation forces, settlers and checkpoints since the six-day war of 1967 between Israel and Arab States. The Palestinian uprising, or intifada, starting in 1987 transformed the dynamics on the ground, producing a new form of expression — more violent — by young Palestinians inside the occupied territory. This was followed by the first Gulf war, where Palestinians across the region had to bear the negative consequences of

their leadership siding with the then Iraqi Head of State, Saddam Hussein. A “peace process” was thereafter initiated, culminating in the Oslo agreements of 1993. These set a timetable for the gradual assumption of Palestinian self-rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, although not in occupied East Jerusalem. In 1994, the Palestinian Authority was set up as a temporary “self-rule” administration to govern areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, pending the conclusion of a “final status” agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Oslo II implementation agreements of 1995 divided the West Bank — the largest part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory — into three zones (Areas “A”, “B” and “C”) with shared Palestinian-Israeli control in two of them but with Israel remaining in total control of Area C. The latter comprises 60 per cent of the West Bank and is an arrangement still in place today. In the 15 years since Oslo II, Israeli forces have repeatedly reoccupied towns and cities in the West Bank, have carried out “targeted” assassinations of Palestinian leaders and have launched two full-scale military offensives against the Gaza Strip, resulting in thousands of Palestinians killed, tens of thousands wounded and great destruction of Palestinian institutions, homes and livelihoods. During this period, Israeli civilians were also repeatedly targeted by attacks from Palestinian militants.

Since 1994, the Palestinian Authority set about establishing the mechanisms of self-government and civil society and developing a distinctly Palestinian infrastructure of institutions and social services, thus laying down the building blocks of a future state. The Palestinians of the occupied territory are at present separated not only geographically but by a split in leadership. The mainstream Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization dominates the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority and rules the West Bank, while the Islamist movement Hamas has de facto been ruling the Gaza enclave since 2007, after its win in legislative elections in 2006 was contested by Fateh and after clashes between Hamas and Fateh over control over the enclave led to a Hamas military victory.

Although talks on a “final status” agreement have continued fitfully, the timetable set out in the Oslo agreements was not met, and Palestinian frustrations exploded in the second (or “Al-Aqsa”) intifada in 2000, since which harsh new Israeli measures have been imposed on Palestinian lives in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2002, Israel began construction of a Barrier, or “separation wall”, enclosing the West Bank and along much of its route looping deep into Palestinian territory and effecting a de facto annexation of significant tracts of Palestinian land, with serious consequences on the livelihood of many Palestinian children.

Since 2003, the “peace process” has been spearheaded by the “Quartet”, comprising the United Nations (in the person of the Secretary-General), the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the European Union, and they have laid out a road map of phased implementation, based on mutual steps by both sides. Few of

the commitments agreed by both parties under the road map have been implemented. In 2005, Israel withdrew its soldiers and evacuated illegal settlers from the Gaza Strip, but it remains in control of all but one of Gaza’s border crossings and its sea, air and telecommunications spaces, and since 2007 has imposed a near-total blockade under which the exit and entry of people and the importation of all but humanitarian goods is prevented. These developments with their impact on children are discussed further in the sections on the Occupied Palestinian Territory below.

The Palestinians in Jordan are almost all Jordanian citizens and live and work under the protective legal and political framework of one of the more stable and forward-looking Arab Governments. There are, however, different categories of Palestinians in Jordan, including about 100,000 refugees formerly from Gaza who do not enjoy Jordanian nationality or full rights, and this has implications for the rights of children and women.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, where Palestinians comprise only about 2 per cent of the total population, they enjoy almost all of the rights of Syrian nationals and full access to education, health care and employment. However, there are still economic and social conditions and constraints that define their lives and the welfare and future prospects of their children.

It is in Lebanon where, after the occupied territory, the Palestinians face the most severe constraints on their daily lives and endure the harshest living conditions, partly because of the right apparently given to the Palestine Liberation Organization in the Cairo agreement of 1969 to carry weapons and to engage in combat with

Israel, a right that no other Arab country had granted to Palestinians. The Palestinians in Lebanon, most of them registered refugees but including thousands of unregistered refugees and “non-ID holders” who suffered particular hardship, had never been given any official status, faced severe restrictions on where they could live or work and

depended on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for their basic needs. This status has changed since August 2010, when the Lebanese parliament voted to grant registered Palestinians access to the same jobs as any foreigner.

II. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION REPORTS ON THE SITUATION OF WORKERS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

At the 100th session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, the International Labour Organization on 1 June 2011 presented the report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. The concluding observations of the report are reproduced below.

Concluding observations

122. The workers in the occupied Arab territories strive to earn their living and realize their aspirations under severe limitations arising out of occupation and separation. In the West Bank and Gaza, young people have been taking to the streets, calling for unity and an end to occupation. Their voices must be heard.

123. Separation has many faces. Among them are the separation resulting from the closure of Gaza; the effects of the Separation Barrier; the separation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank; the myriad of separation measures enforced in the West Bank areas; and the separation of the Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan from their homeland. In all these contexts, the workers suffer different forms of separation from decent work and incomes. These constraints are created by human beings, and human beings have the capacity to undo them.

124. In making some concluding remarks and recommendations, the mission is aware

that they address different kinds of situations. They should be understood in the context of both the overarching need to put an end to the occupation and the need to build a viable Palestinian State. Immediate, albeit partial, measures can be pursued to alleviate the plight of workers and entrepreneurs under the occupation. They are not the solution to the constraints of occupation; they seek to provide a degree of justice to those workers who have been caught in the wheels of occupation and suffered from the exploitation it permits. Other measures will need to accompany the building of a democratic Palestinian State with a strong social dimension. The fact that the State is not yet a universally recognized reality does not mean that these measures should not be undertaken now, as an integral part of the process of achieving statehood, and building upon the considerable achievements of the Palestinian Authority to date.

125. The increased movement of people in the West Bank is welcome, but the trend towards easing restrictions on movement must be continued and extended to East

Jerusalem and Gaza. In particular, for both human and economic reasons, the blockade of Gaza must end; dependence on external assistance must be reduced; and legitimate enterprise and employment must be encouraged. Gaza must not remain a closed aid-dependent area with growth coming from informal and illegitimate activities.

126. Increased trade within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and with the outside world is essential for a vibrant and sustained Palestinian economy. Under conditions of peace and coexistence, each and every country in the region will be able to share the fruits of economic prosperity.

127. The legitimate Palestinian private sector must grow in order to create more employment for Palestinian women and men. Access to land and to natural resources, including water, is critical for developing the economic base of the new State.

128. The potential of the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection has to be maximized in order to alleviate poverty effectively, provide protection to the unemployed and find viable alternatives for Palestinian workers who currently depend on work in the settlements for their income.

129. The question of a minimum wage needs to be addressed through a serious examination of the wage system, which should also tackle the problem of the extremely low wages paid to women. Tripartite consultation involving employers' and workers' organizations is necessary in this context. Assistance by the International Labour Organization (ILO) can be made use of in this process.

130. Determined action is needed for settling the claims of Palestinian workers

against Israeli employers. The obstacles faced by these workers in seeking a settlement, with or without going to court, can be alleviated through cooperation between the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions and the Histadrut. The experience of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions legal clinic, which ILO has been supporting, should be further built on.

131. The labour and employment-related laws and regulations of the future Palestinian State need to be firmly anchored in international labour standards to ensure that they support decent work. In particular, the future laws on trade unions and employers' organizations need to be in line with the principles of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, as well as other fundamental principles and rights at work. Legislative reform calls for wide consultation, and the services of ILO are available to this end.

132. For their development, the economy and society need to tap the potential of women. The participation of women in the Palestinian labour force must be improved in ways which do not perpetuate or reinforce traditional patterns or gender stereotypes. The role of the National Women's Employment Committee could be central in this regard, and it should be given the resources, training and mandate necessary to be able to move forward with a bold agenda. The National Tripartite Advisory Committee could also play a role in this context, as gender issues should be mainstreamed into all policies and institutions.

133. Strong institutional arrangements for social dialogue are needed, and they have to constantly feed into the broader policy dialogue. The social dimension should not be an afterthought or a secondary

consideration. It must be placed at the top of the strategic development agenda, together with the key economic and political priorities.

134. The peace process must be effectively extended to resolve the situation of the occupied Syrian Golan so that the fundamental rights of the Syrian citizens are realized.

III. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS CONDEMNS MOSQUE ATTACK

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, on 7 June 2011 issued the following statement on the attack on a mosque in the West Bank village of Al-Mughayyir:

I condemn today's desecration of a mosque in the village of Al-Mughayyir in the occupied West Bank. The actions of Israeli extremists are highly provocative and threatening. I note the condemnation of this attack by the Israeli Government and stress the need for forceful action against this and

other like attacks. Consistent with its obligations under international law as the occupying Power, the Israeli Government must ensure the accountability of those responsible and protect the human rights of Palestinians and their property, including religious sites.

IV. UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST REPORTS ON UNEMPLOYMENT IN GAZA

On 13 June 2011, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East issued a new report on the anniversary of the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Excerpts of the report's summary are reproduced below.

Summary

The Gaza labour market in the second half of 2010 showed growth in employment and unemployment relative to the same period in 2009. A comparison between the first half and the second half of 2010, however, suggests the return of negative trends, with job losses, higher levels of unemployment and higher unemployment rates. This was in the context of declining labour force participation among refugees in particular. Despite employment gains, nominal and real wages continued to deteriorate under the weight of persistently high unemployment rates.

Despite marginal easing of the Israeli blockade, most employment growth between the second half of 2009 and the second half of 2010 was generated by the public sector. After the decline of the public sector in the second half of 2009, when thousands of temporary hires for the post-Gaza war relief effort were released, the sector resumed hiring. Construction employment was the main source of job generation in the private sector, with agriculture and transport also contributing to job growth. Job losses were greatest in private services (which include employment at the United Nations and in non-governmental organizations) but also significant in commerce and manufacturing.

Refugee labour force participation continued to decline while that of non-refugees rose in the year-on-year comparison. Refugee employment declined while that of non-refugees surged. Refugee unemployment increased while that for non-refugees declined. Unemployment rates for refugees rose while those for non-refugees fell. Average wages continued to fall, but refugee wages remained substantially above those of non-refugees. At 45.2 per cent, the broad unemployment rate in Gaza remained among the highest in the world in the second half of 2010. The combination of persistently high unemployment and the

continuing deterioration of the real wages of working people underlie significant levels of poverty.

Details on these trends for the entire Gaza Strip labour force, and for refugees and non-refugees separately, appear below. Section 1 provides overall findings regarding labour force participation, employment by sector and activity, unemployment and wages in Gaza. Section 2 presents results for refugees, and section 3 outlines findings for non-refugees. All data come from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

V. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME REPORTS ON IMPACT OF “EASING” OF GAZA BLOCKADE

The World Food Programme on 22 June 2011 issued a report entitled “Gaza: eased or un-eased? changes on Gaza market and household conditions following Israel’s 20 June 2010 new access regime”. The text of the executive summary and key recommendations of the report are reproduced below.

Executive summary

The Government of Israel announced on 20 June 2010 its decision to “ease” the blockade¹ on the Gaza Strip by expanding commercial crossings and improving access to humanitarian and commercial goods except any “dual-use items” that could be used for potential military activity against the State of Israel. On 8 December 2010, the Government of Israel announced that it would allow the export of agricultural products, furniture and textile products

through the crossings to assist the Gaza economy.² Since the announcement, a list of controlled dual-use items was published.³ However, a list of items not permitted into Gaza has not been released. While construction materials have been allowed entry for some projects, the coordination procedures are heavy and cause delays in implementation, which increase costs for humanitarian agencies. The planned

¹ The Government of Israel imposed an almost full closure on goods and movement of people in and out of the Gaza Strip following Hamas’s takeover of Gaza in June 2007. The closure, or blockade, caused a massive drop in imports and a near-total ban on exports and movement of people. Consequently, Gaza’s economy nearly collapsed, unemployment skyrocketed and Gaza’s economy and population became reliant on humanitarian aid/assistance.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Security Cabinet decision on Gaza Strip exports, 8 December 2010.

³ Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Ministry of Defense of Israel, “The Civilian policy towards the Gaza Strip”, 5 July 2010. Available from www.pmo.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/EBDB36CF-2BA0-4719-B532-F723C7CF2456/0/gazaENG.pdf. The list of controlled dual-use items includes missile equipment and munitions; dual-use items; and dual-use items for Palestinian Authority-approved projects.

expansion of commercial crossings did not take effect; rather, Karni was closed in March 2011 and only one crossing is open for import and export of goods.⁴ In effect, the easing of the blockade has had only a marginal positive impact in Gaza.

The present report reviews how the above-mentioned policy, hereinafter referred to as the “new access regime”, have had an impact on the economic situation in the Gaza Strip. In March 2011, the World Food Programme (WFP) country office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory conducted market and household surveys in order to assess the functioning of the Gaza food market in terms of market structure, prices, supply and the difference in the level of availability of certain key commodities, as well as to determine the impact of the policy on food access and availability among Gaza’s population.⁵ The analysis focuses on the impact of the new access regime on key market factors, for example the fluctuation of commodity prices, the variability in the smuggling of goods through the Rafah tunnels, and the closing of Karni crossing, as well as on producers, traders and consumers. Household spending and consumption patterns are also examined. To complement the WFP assessment, additional information was used from the Palestine Trade Centre and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

The results of the assessment are arranged in the report as follows: (a) changes in the macroeconomic environment

⁴ The Agreement on Movement and Access signed in November 2005 between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority planned to expand to six commercial crossings, including Rafah, for import and export. Today, only Kerem Shalom crossing is in operation for import/export.

⁵ WFP surveyed 207 Gaza traders and 1,217 households. The methodology used is provided in the full report.

(imports, exports, crossings, transport costs); (b) changes at the local food market level (food manufacturers, traders, selected food commodity supply chains); (c) changes at the household level (food security, consumption/expenditure patterns, coping strategies); and (d) key recommendations.

...

4. Key recommendations

Until the blockade is abolished, the following steps should be taken by the Government of Israel to revitalize the productive economy in the Gaza Strip and have a positive impact on Gaza household income and food security levels:

- In accordance with the decision of 20 June 2010, publish a list of items not permitted into the Gaza Strip; open all commercial crossings, including the Karni conveyor belt, to allow the timely and cost-effective delivery of goods and humanitarian assistance; and enhance crossing capacity and streamline transportation/coordination procedures so as not to inflate prices of imports and exports.
- Lift the remaining ban on import of goods and private investment inputs, namely raw materials, to drive growth in the private sector.
- Implement the agreement between the Government of Israel and the Office of the Quartet Representative on the relaxation of exports, as agreed in February 2011.
- Abolish restrictions imposed on the destination of the exports to allow exports to the West Bank and Israel.
- Allow the export of higher value added goods to ensure proper economic growth.

- Facilitate local procurement of humanitarian food items in Gaza and allow transport of Gaza-produced goods for humanitarian use in the West Bank and/or other countries as required.
- Lift restrictions on access to land and sea in order for agriculture-dependent and fishing livelihoods to rebuild and thrive and to enhance local production.
- Permit spare parts and equipment to return Gaza's sole power plant to normal operating levels in order to reduce power cuts, which impede local production.
- Improve access in and out of Gaza of international/national humanitarian and private sector personnel.

As long as the blockade, with the new access regime, continues, the private sector in the Gaza Strip will not be revitalized to its full potential. More employment opportunities and stable and higher wages are necessary for Gaza's poorest households to have access to food and non-food requirements without external

assistance. As long as the private sector continues to be hampered by unfavourable access conditions, it is further recommended that the humanitarian community:

- Ensure a large assistance coverage (i.e., food, cash and vouchers) of the Gaza households to help them cope with the impact of the maintained restrictions on the movement of goods and persons on their livelihoods.
- Address the lack of competitiveness of Gaza producers and manufacturers. The humanitarian community should increase its efforts in supporting local businesses to overcome bottlenecks, including the small market, high transport costs, power cuts and unreliable access to spare parts and raw materials.
- Strengthen ongoing efforts to advocate for a full lifting of the blockade, which suppresses and weakens the Gaza Strip economy and population.

VI. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 23 June 2011, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following excerpts are from the briefing (S/PV.6562):

As popular protest and political change continue to sweep the region, the Israeli-Palestinian political process remains at a dangerous standstill. The Secretary-General is increasingly worried about the impasse. The resumption of meaningful negotiations is urgent.

In that context, the Secretary-General hopes that both parties will demonstrate a renewed determination to

achieve a peace agreement that provides for two States living side by side in dignity, security and peace, consistent with long-established and recognized parameters. He believes that President Obama, in his speech of 19 May, offered important ideas that could help the peace talks to move forward, consistent with international positions and responding to the legitimate core concerns of both parties. He encourages Prime

Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to respond positively to that important speech.

...

The Secretary-General strongly supports the convening of the Quartet at the principals' level soon. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Robert Serry, is in close contact with his fellow envoys in that regard, and with the parties. In addition, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Alain Juppé, made proposals for resuming negotiations, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, visited the region to impress upon the parties the European Union's sense of urgency and concern.

During the reporting period, Fatah and Hamas leaders met under Egyptian auspices to discuss the implementation of the reconciliation agreement concluded in Cairo on 4 May. Factional representatives also met in Moscow and Ankara. On 24 May, the League of Arab States discussed ways to support the implementation of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement and to provide financial assistance to the Palestinians. President Abbas also held consultations in Saudi Arabia on 13 June. However, no agreement has yet been reached on the composition of the proposed Government.

...

Security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in the West Bank continues and must be maintained. I welcome the announcement that an eighth battalion of Palestinian security forces will be trained in Jordan with international

assistance, bringing the number of internationally trained Palestinian security forces maintaining law and order in the West Bank to about 4,000.

We count on Israel's continued cooperation in keeping up regular transfers of value added tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, in line with its international obligations. Those transfers help to ensure the payment of salaries for essential State functions, including security. It is also critical that donors commit additional funds to support the Palestinian Authority's recurrent budgetary expenditures, given its projected budget gap of approximately \$300 million for the year.

We will continue to work towards the full implementation of all aspects of resolution 1860 (2009) regarding Gaza. An overall state of calm between Israel and Gaza has generally prevailed for the past 10 weeks. However, during the reporting period, two rockets and two mortars were fired at Israel from Gaza, fortunately causing no injuries or damage, while Israel conducted six incursions and one air strike. One Palestinian civilian was killed by Israeli fire on 21 May while approaching the border fence during the night, and two civilians were injured by Israeli forces on 20 and 29 May, respectively. We continue to urge calm and restraint for the sake of the civilian populations on both sides.

On 16 June, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) summer games were launched in Gaza, providing thousands of children with recreational and learning activities. We welcome Israel's approval, earlier this week, of a further \$100 million in UNRWA construction projects, in particular 1,100

UNRWA housing units in Khan Younis and Rafah and a further 18 UNRWA schools, bringing the total of approved United Nations reconstruction over the past 15 months to approximately \$265 million. We continue to stress that the market in aggregate, steel bar and cement can and should be liberalized by the Israeli authorities.

On 25 May, Egypt announced extended working hours and eased crossing procedures for persons at the Rafah crossing point between Gaza and Egypt, subject to security checks. Difficulties have surfaced between Egypt and the de facto Hamas authorities in the implementation of that adjustment. Efforts to combat the smuggling of weapons through tunnels continue.

In relation to reports that a new flotilla is planned in the next few days, I want to reiterate today the strong view of the United Nations that assistance for the population of Gaza should be delivered through official crossings. The Secretary-General has called upon, and written letters to, Governments concerned to use their influence to discourage flotillas, which carry the potential for dangerous escalation. All involved must act responsibly and with caution to avoid any violent incidents.

On 25 June, Israeli staff sergeant Gilad Shalit will have spent five years in Hamas captivity. We urge humanitarian access to him and his immediate release, and hope that prisoner-exchange efforts will bear fruit. This would have a favourable impact on the situation of several thousand Palestinian prisoners in Israel and on the broader political atmosphere. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process uses its contacts with all parties to support efforts in this regard.

Israeli settlement activity continued in violation of international law and the road map. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, construction was under way on 1,774 units in the first quarter of 2011 in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. The Ministry of Defence approved an additional 294 units in the settlement of Beitar Illit during the reporting period. Settlement activity is continuing in East Jerusalem as well. I note with concern the conduct of a dedication ceremony at the settlement of Ma'aleh Zeitim, in the heart of the Palestinian East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ras Al-Amud, in the presence of the Knesset Speaker and senior Cabinet members.

We are concerned that continued demolitions in Area C are displacing Palestinians from their communities. The Israel Defense Forces demolished 81 Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including 2 in East Jerusalem, displacing 260 people, including 145 children. This included the demolition of 29 structures in Al-Hadidiya and in the northern Jordan Valley on 21 June. The planning regime applied by the Israeli authorities in this area prohibits residents from constructing any structures in their community.

On 5 June, large crowds of demonstrators in two locations in the Golan attempted to breach the ceasefire line and cross the technical fence.

...

Riots took place the following day in the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in the Syrian Arab Republic during funerals for those killed, apparently in frustration against Palestinian factions based in the Syrian Arab Republic that had encouraged the breach attempt, resulting in a reported 12 killed.

...

Demonstrations in the West Bank resulted in approximately 120 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier injured and 15 Palestinians arrested by the Israel Defense Forces. In other demonstrations during the reporting period, violent clashes between anti-barrier protesters and Israeli security forces resulted in 95 Palestinians injured and numerous arrests and cases of gas inhalation. The Israel Defense Forces conducted 386 search operations in the occupied West Bank, in which 139 Palestinians were injured and 329 arrested, among them three members of the Palestinian Legislative Council from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas and two Fatah leaders, while 25 Israeli security officers were injured.

Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank resulted in 13 Palestinian injuries and extensive material damage. Palestinian property was vandalized in Nablus on 29 May by Israelis visiting Joseph's Tomb, a nearby Palestinian-controlled religious site. In response to the dismantling by the Israel Defense Forces of a settlement outpost near the Shiloh settlement on 2 June, settlers attacked Palestinians and their property under the so-called price-tag policy. A mosque in the village of Al-Mughayyir was set on fire and its outside walls were sprayed

with graffiti on 7 June. The Government of Israel condemned the attack. The Special Coordinator condemned the desecration and called upon the Government of Israel to ensure the accountability of those responsible and to protect the Palestinians' rights and property, including religious sites.

...

In conclusion, with both the Palestinians and Israelis stressing their desire to negotiate, President Obama's speech contained ideas that the international community could rally behind to offer a framework to resume talks and seek an agreement. The Secretary-General looks forward to the Quartet giving impetus to this objective through a meeting at the principals' level soon.

What is most important, however, is that the leaders on the ground rise to the challenge. They face political risks, and there are many questions in the minds of their publics. There is also a gulf of confidence between the parties. But we appeal to them to return to negotiations in the interests of their respective peoples, without further delay, and to negotiate seriously in order to reach an agreement. We will continue to work with the parties and our regional and international partners in this cause.

VII. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED SINCE 1967 CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE LIFTING OF GAZA BLOCKADE

On 23 June 2011, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, issued remarks on the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Excerpts from his remarks are reproduced below.

The blockade is a deliberate policy of collective punishment which is legally indefensible and morally reprehensible. It is aimed at denying Palestinians humanity and a life with dignity.

The blockade of Gaza must be lifted entirely and immediately. This grim overall reality persists despite the recent positive gesture from Israel to the effect that it would allow the entry of some construction material in the Gaza Strip.

The situation of health care there is nothing short of catastrophic. Gaza's health ministry has reported that the Strip's medical supplies and equipment have reached emergency levels. Of the 480 medications on the essential drug list, 178 (37 per cent) are reported to be at zero stock levels and more than 190 types of medicine

in stock are either expired or close to their expiry date.

A severe shortage of vital drugs is having a critical impact on the continued delivery of health care. Israel, as the occupying Power, has the obligation under international humanitarian law to restore and maintain public order and civil life, including public welfare for the civilian population.

This encompasses, among other things, the provision and maintenance of infrastructure, health and the material conditions of life. Israel's absolute closure of Gaza, however, not only denies the whole of Gaza's civilian population the possibility of a normal life, but also collectively punishes them for acts for which they bear no responsibility.

VIII. SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES SERGEANT GILAD SHALIT

The following statement was issued on 24 June 2011 by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General (SG/SM/13669):

On the fifth anniversary of the captivity of Israeli staff sergeant Gilad Shalit, the Secretary-General calls for his immediate release. He also joins the Director-General of the International Red Cross in calling on Hamas to protect his life, treat him humanely, prove that he is alive and allow the Shalit family to have contact with their son. The Secretary-General calls on Hamas to comply with international humanitarian law, and commends a coalition

of Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations for calling for his humane treatment.

The United Nations will continue to support the conclusion of negotiation efforts on the ground to secure his release, which would also entail the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners. The Secretary-General is convinced that this issue must now be resolved.

IX. UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN SUPPORT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS CONVENES IN BRUSSELS

The United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, was convened in Brussels on 28 and 29 June 2011 under the theme of “The role of Europe in advancing Palestinian statehood and achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians”. The Secretary-General was represented by Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The text of the concluding statement of the organizers is reproduced below.

1. The International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Brussels on 28 and 29 June 2011.

2. The Meeting aimed to contribute to international efforts to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians by looking at the role of Europe in advancing a two-State solution. It took stock of 20 years of European efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking; examined current efforts to resume direct negotiations for a permanent settlement; and looked at other possible options, including achieving a two-State solution through multilateral mechanisms. The Meeting considered current European political initiatives, including the parameters for a negotiated settlement endorsed by the European Union in April 2011, as well as the role of parliamentarians and civil society in promoting peace.

3. At the outset of the Meeting, the participants reviewed the role of Europe during the past 20 years of efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace. They acknowledged the Peace Conference on the Middle East held in Madrid in 1991 as a decisive step towards initiating a political process and negotiations between the parties. Its terms of reference, including the

land-for-peace formula, provided the vision for ending the Israeli occupation of Arab lands that started on 4 June 1967 and achieving peace between Israel and all its neighbours. They also assessed the peace process that started with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 as a result of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. It led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and its various self-governing institutions. In the absence of a breakthrough in the political process, in 2003 the Quartet, with the active participation of the European Union, developed a road map — a performance-based guide to a permanent two-State solution of the conflict. European countries played and continue to play an important role in all stages of that process. Their efforts were complemented by initiatives of other countries or groups of countries, such as the United States under the Clinton administration, producing important parameters for a solution and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. These milestone initiatives in Middle East peacemaking were geared towards building confidence and trust between the parties and, with the assistance of the wider international community, arrive at a solution to all permanent status issues: borders, security, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and water. The organizers shared the serious concern expressed by many participants that these various initiatives had so far not led to

a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, they produced a set of principles for a solution recognized by the Palestinian side and the world community. The time has come for the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within mutually recognized borders, to take shape, with the independence of a sovereign and viable State of Palestine.

4. The participants looked into the current state of affairs in the political process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, regretting the prolonged impasse of the peace efforts and reiterating their full support for the revival of the Middle East peace process, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet's road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The organizers urged the parties to resume, without delay, direct negotiations on the basis of the well-known and globally accepted parameters, which represented the path to the resolution of the conflict preferred by the international community. The organizers appreciate that the participants had stated their firm commitment to ending the Israeli occupation, which started on 4 June 1967, in order to achieve a permanent two-State solution in which Israel and Palestine would live side by side in peace and security within mutually recognized borders.

5. The organizers once again emphasized that developments on the ground were critical and crucial in creating a climate conducive to a resumption of negotiations. They reiterate that Israeli settlements and the separation wall built on Palestinian land are illegal under international law and represent an obstacle

to peace and should be stopped in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

6. The participants pointed out that the fundamental changes sweeping across the Arab world had made the need for progress on the Middle East peace process all the more urgent. The organizers agree that it is imperative to redouble efforts to break the deadlock and support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for independence in their State of Palestine. Reaching a solution between Israel and the Palestinians would also be an important stabilizing force in the wider Middle East.

7. The organizers and the participants appreciate the European Union's political support towards the resumption of the peace process and its position on the key parameters and principles, set out in the Council of the European Union's conclusions of December 2009 and reaffirmed in its conclusions in December 2010. These include the European Union's position not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties, and its support towards finding a solution to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States.

8. The organizers, together with a number of participants, welcomed the joint Security Council statement by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France and Germany, as well as of Portugal, of February 2011, subsequently endorsed by the European Union, which called for the creation of the Palestinian State on pre-1967 borders, with agreed land swaps, an immediate halt to settlement activity, a just, fair and agreed solution to the question of Palestinian refugees, and agreement on the status of Jerusalem as the

future capital of both countries. The statements also called for security arrangements that respect Palestinian sovereignty and protect Israel's security. The participants also recalled the speech by President Barack Obama on 19 May 2011, which underscored the need to establish the Palestinian State on pre-1967 borders.

9. The participants noted the important role played by the Quartet and called on it to take the lead and convene an urgent meeting, as called for by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, in order to endorse parameters for a negotiated two-State settlement set out in the joint Security Council statement. The participants also welcomed the initiative by France to convene a peace conference with both parties in July in an effort to restart the negotiations with a view to achieving a solution to the conflict.

10. The organizers wish to reiterate the importance of the readiness of Palestinian institutions for statehood, referring to the assessments by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations that the Palestinian Authority is above the threshold for a functioning State in the key sectors studied and that Palestinian institutions compare favourably with those in established states; and the subsequent endorsement by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of these assessments.

11. The organizers wish to express appreciation to the European Union for its political and financial support for the State-building process by the Palestinian Authority. The participants noted the financial support provided by the European Union to the Palestinian Authority, through the European Commission, which represented the largest share of the

multilateral assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The participants praised the individual member States of the European Union, some of which were among the main bilateral donors to the Palestinian Authority. The participants also welcomed the signing in April 2011 of the Agreement between the European Union and the Palestinian Authority, giving immediate access and full liberalization to all agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products originating in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which would further facilitate Palestinian trade, a crucial element for an emerging viable State.

12. The participants pointed out, however, that progress on the socioeconomic front was not sufficient as long as the main obstacle to the development, namely the occupation, was still in place. In particular, the participants expressed frustration at the fact that the political track continued to fall behind the significant progress made by the Palestinian Authority in its State-building agenda.

13. The organizers stressed the importance of Palestinian internal unity for the creation of the viable, sovereign and internationally recognized State of Palestine. They welcomed the reconciliation agreement concluded in April 2011 under Egyptian auspices and called on the parties to fully implement it. The organizers wish to express appreciation for the continued efforts of Egypt to assist in bringing about Palestinian reconciliation. The organizers welcome the support of the European Union to the Palestinian reconciliation efforts based on the principles of non-violence and its commitment to continue its support, including through direct financial assistance, for a new Palestinian Government composed of independent figures, as expressed in the conclusions of the Council of the European

Union on 23 May 2011 and reaffirmed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

14. The participants noted that the month of September would be important for Palestinian and international efforts to bring about Palestinian statehood. In particular, a number of factors would converge in September: President Obama's target for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians; the completion of the Palestinian two-year State-building programme; and the request by the Palestinians for the recognition of their statehood. The participants noted the efforts of Palestine, the Arabs and others in advancing the cause of recognition and admission of Palestine as a member of the United Nations at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which would start in September 2011.

15. In this regard, the participants noted that Palestine had already been recognized as a State by a substantial number of countries. The organizers endorse the call by the participants on the European Union to collectively recognize the State of Palestine, as well as on its member States to individually recognize the State of Palestine, if they have not already done so.

16. Turning to the national parliaments, inter-parliamentary organizations and civil society organizations, the participants pointed out the important role that these organizations had played in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian political process,

particularly through their work towards upholding international law and promoting an effective political dialogue aimed at resuming the negotiations and resolving all permanent status issues. The organizers encourage these organizations to develop closer cooperation among themselves, with Israeli and Palestinian lawmakers and civil society organizations and with the United Nations and its Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and remain closely engaged on the issue, with a view to supporting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

17. The organizers welcome the critical role played by the European Union and individual European States in achieving a durable peace in the Middle East. The organizers reiterate their appreciation for the strong support by the officials of the European Union, as well as individual European Union member States for broader international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The organizers encourage the policymaking organs of the European Union and its member States to continue to play an active role in various aspects of the political process, in addition to the European Commission's substantial economic assistance, including through supporting Palestinian statehood at the United Nations during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly starting in September 2011.