



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

October 2011
Volume XXXIV, Bulletin No. 10

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. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT A SPIKE IN SETTLER VIOLENCE

The Spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the following statement on 11 October 2011:

The United Nations human rights office is concerned about a spike in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank since the beginning of September. We are particularly concerned about the situation in the Palestinian village of Qusra, which lies close to Nablus in the northern West Bank. Qusra has been targeted by settlers at least six times in the past six weeks. The attacks took various forms and are emblematic of the phenomenon of settler violence throughout the West Bank. They resulted in substantial property loss and damage in addition to cases of serious physical injury. A mosque was torched, hundreds of trees were cut down and a Palestinian civilian was killed following the intervention of an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) unit. Palestinians from this village have in the past already lost access to hundreds of acres of land due to settlement expansion and the erection of outposts.

Two of the most recent examples include the shooting dead of a Palestinian civilian by an IDF soldier in Qusra on 23 September. On the same day, two Palestinian minors were detained for two hours during which they were allegedly beaten up and humiliated by the IDF soldiers before being released. In the early morning of 6 October, Palestinians from the village discovered at least 200 trees belonging to four different families had been cut down. The trees represented the main source of income for the families.

A report by the Secretary-General entitled “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan” is due to be released in the next few days. It addresses the continuation of Israeli settlement construction and its impact on the human rights of the residents, including violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property and the lack of accountability for settler violence. The report was prepared by the United Nations human rights office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in cooperation with various other United Nations entities.

We call upon the Government of Israel to fulfil its obligation under international human rights and international humanitarian law to protect Palestinian civilians and property in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. More needs to be done to effectively prevent attacks by settlers against Palestinian civilians, and when such attacks do occur they should be properly investigated by the Israeli authorities. Victims should also be appropriately compensated for their losses. With the olive harvest season beginning in a few days’ time, we urge the Israeli authorities to take effective measures to stop attacks by settlers in the occupied West Bank.

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II. BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN PRISONERS IN ISRAELI PRISONS

On 13 October 2011, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following statement (GA/PAL/1211):

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expresses its grave concern about the situation of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners held by Israel, who have joined an open-ended hunger strike since 27 September 2011 in protest against the latest deterioration of their conditions of detention and the systematic violation of their fundamental human rights by the occupying Power, including the imposition of solitary confinement and restrictions on family visits. The Israeli prison authorities have regrettably responded with additional punitive measures against the hunger strikers.

The Bureau recalls that, since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, at least 750,000 Palestinian civilians have been arrested, detained and imprisoned by Israel. Currently, thousands of Palestinians are held in political detention by Israel, including children, women and elected officials. The Bureau is alarmed by credible, well-documented reports of the systematic abuse; mistreatment; medical neglect; denial of due process, legal assistance and visits; arbitrary detention; humiliation; and torture to which Palestinian prisoners are subjected on a daily basis at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces, in blatant contravention of international humanitarian and human rights instruments, including the Geneva Conventions.

Of particular concern to the Bureau is the situation of the vulnerable prisoners—women, children and the sick. Moreover, the

Bureau is deeply troubled by the devastating effects the ongoing arrests campaign is having on the very fabric of Palestinian society. The Bureau is appalled that Palestinian prisoners and their families have been used as hostages by the Government of Israel in a deliberate campaign of pressure for political ends.

The Bureau welcomes the recent agreement mediated by Egypt to release a substantial number of Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and calls for an early release of all political prisoners incarcerated illegally by Israel and for their speedy reintegration into society. Until that time, Israel should reverse its repressive measures and scrupulously comply with its international obligations. The Bureau calls upon the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Health Organization, to monitor and ensure compliance by Israel.

The Bureau is mindful of the critical importance of the prisoners issue to a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both as a confidence-building measure and as a sine qua non of a permanent settlement. The Committee will continue to keep the situation under review, raise international awareness of the prisoners' issue and advocate for an urgent solution as part of its mandated activities to promote a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

III. SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT EFFORTS TO ADVANCE PLANNING FOR NEW ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

The Spokesperson for the Secretary-General issued the following statement on 14 October 2011 (SG/SM/13879):

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about continued efforts to advance planning for new Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem. Recent developments in this regard have been unacceptable, particularly as efforts are ongoing to resume negotiations, and run contrary to the Quartet's call upon the parties to refrain from provocations. The

Secretary-General reiterates that settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank is contrary to international law and to Israel's obligations under the road map, and must cease. He further reiterates that the international community will not recognize unilateral actions on the ground and that the status of Jerusalem can only be resolved through negotiations.

IV. WORLD BANK REPORTS ON POVERTY AND INCLUSION IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

On 16 October 2011, the World Bank issued a report entitled "Coping with conflict: poverty and inclusion in the West Bank and Gaza". A summary of the report is reproduced below.

A new report by the World Bank reveals a precarious economic situation in Gaza, where donor aid is keeping the economy afloat, unemployment is high and a significant portion of the population lives very close to the poverty line. This report is the first major analysis of poverty in the West Bank and Gaza since 2001. It finds that international donor aid is driving a decline in poverty, even as unemployment increases and the economic structure demonstrates no improvement. Research shows that donor aid in the region is relatively well coordinated, especially within the Palestinian Authority. Only a fifth of all beneficiaries received more than one source of aid, and only 6 per cent of all households receive multiple sources of assistance from the Palestinian Authority.

The nature of poverty in the West Bank and Gaza is intrinsically tied to and must be understood within the historical and political context of this region. Over the past five decades, political developments in the

West Bank and Gaza have had a significant impact on the social and economic well-being of Palestinians. Changes in domestic, Israeli and international policies have affected the Palestinian economy throughout this period, in terms of both growth trends and the volatility of growth. This has a natural consequence on indicators of well-being at the household and individual level. Following the second intifada of 2000, the Palestinian economy began to resemble no other in the world. Limited say over economic policies and trade, the extent of dependence on Israel and international aid and a regime of internal and external closures has created an economy characterized by extreme fluctuations in growth and employment and an increasing divergence between the two territories: the West Bank a fragmented archipelago; and Gaza an increasingly isolated island.

Despite stringent Israeli restrictions, the West Bank and Gaza outperform countries with similar per capita incomes on

many dimensions of development, and is in fact on par with much richer countries such as Turkey and Jordan. This suggests that within its limited ambit of influence, the

Palestinian Authority has implemented effective policies and ensured service delivery, which bodes well for the formation of a future Palestinian state.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL WELCOMES PRISONER EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

The following is a statement issued on 18 October 2011 by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General regarding the prisoner exchange agreement leading to the release of Israeli staff sergeant Gilad Shalit and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners (SG/SM/13886).

The Secretary-General welcomed the recent prisoner exchange agreement and views today's releases as a significant humanitarian breakthrough. He has long called for the end of the unacceptable captivity of Gilad Shalit and has also called for the release of Palestinian prisoners. For several years, the United Nations has actively supported channels of dialogue to resolve this issue.

The Secretary-General thanks Egypt for its contribution to this outcome, and Germany for its efforts. In the aftermath, the Secretary-General hopes that more far-reaching steps will be taken to end the closure of Gaza and enable reconstruction. He continues to call in the same context for an end to the smuggling of weapons and a sustained calm between Israel and Gaza.

VI. PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WELCOMES THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS

The following is a statement issued on 18 October 2011 by the President of the General Assembly on the Israeli-Palestinian prisoner exchange agreement.

The President of the General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, welcomes the exchange of prisoners involving Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The President of the General Assembly wishes to thank the States and Governments, as well as all other parties that have worked tirelessly over many years to facilitate these releases.

subject that President Al-Nasser has identified as one of the key focus areas during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. President Al-Nasser hopes this exchange of prisoners will help boost renewed efforts to find a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He urges all parties to recommit to fresh negotiations and extra efforts towards the realization of the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony.

This positive development reinforces the importance of mediation and negotiation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, a

**VII. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED SINCE 1967
REPORTS ON THE SYSTEMATIC VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

On 20 October 2011, in the course of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, briefed the Third Committee on the situation of Palestinian children. The following is the text of the briefing note issued on the occasion (GA/SHC/4016).

The prolonged Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories had placed a tremendous burden on civilians and had an even heavier impact on children, “whose development is deformed by pervasive deprivations affecting health, education and overall security”, a top United Nations official told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee) today.

Richard Falk, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said evidence suggested a pattern of increasing abuse through specific policies that systematically violated the rights of children under international humanitarian law. Further, experts on child development agreed that children suffered more from violations than adults and “the protection of their rights should be of urgent concern to the international community”.

Mr. Falk, who was presenting his annual report, said that Israel had again this year refused to cooperate with his mandate and allow him access to the territories. But, he noted that many children arrested for stone-throwing were subject to Israeli military law. That process, as documented by United Nations agencies, included arrests in the middle of the night, removal of the child from the parent for questioning and abundant anecdotal evidence of abusive treatment in detention.

Related to that had been an alarming increase in settler violence in 2011, he said,

with 178 documented injuries to Palestinians during the first half of this year compared to 176 for all of 2010 and with almost daily accounts of vandalism against Palestinian agricultural land and villages.

A further dimension to those activities was frequent settler harassment of Palestinian children on their way to school, which had reportedly discouraged many children and their families from even attending. “Overall, the failure to prevent and punish settler violence remains a serious and ongoing violation of Israel’s most fundamental obligation under international humanitarian law to protect a civilian population living under occupation”, he said.

He recommended that the Government of Israel immediately adopt the non-governmental organization B’Tselem’s guidelines to protect Palestinian children who were arrested or detained, as a minimum basis for compliance with international humanitarian law. Further, Israel also needed to develop and implement appropriate detention and imprisonment policies for all Palestinians.

The Special Rapporteur also recommended allowing entry into Gaza urgently needed materials to repair water and electricity infrastructure and an immediate lifting of the unlawful blockade of Gaza. Finally, he recommended that a request be made to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the legal status of prolonged occupation.

During the question-and-answer session following his presentation, Mr. Falk expressed support for Palestine's recent request to be admitted as a Member State of the United Nations. In the new political atmosphere of revolutions in the Middle East, Palestinian statehood should be supported as an ingredient of self-determination that should not be tied to the resolution of final status issues.

"There is no credible reason to defer Palestinian statehood and membership in the United Nations, given these realities", he argued, stressing that to deny the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people was just to express the failure of the international community, and the United Nations system, to act in accordance with the global rule of law.

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

On 24 October 2011, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. 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.6636).

On 18 October, Israel and Hamas implemented the first stage of a prisoner exchange agreement. Israeli Sergeant Gilad Shalit, held in Gaza without international access since 25 June 2006, was released by Hamas. Four hundred and seventy-seven Palestinian prisoners—many of whom had been imprisoned for involvement in attacks on Israelis—were released, mostly to Gaza, but also to the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan and Israel proper. Forty-two prisoners were released to Turkey, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. In all, 205 prisoners were transferred, in accordance with the exchange agreement, to locations other than their residence before detention.

In their public remarks following the exchange, Hamas officials unfortunately and unacceptably lauded violent resistance, and some of the released prisoners made deplorable statements glorifying acts of violence. Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that Israel would continue to fight terrorism.

Approximately 5,000 Palestinians remain in Israeli prisons. A further 550 of these are to be released within two months in the second phase of the exchange agreement. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails suspended a hunger strike the day before the prisoner exchange, following the reported agreement of the Israeli authorities to end solitary confinement. We continue to follow closely the security, political and human rights dimensions of the prisoner issue.

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The Quartet statement of 23 September provides a framework for the parties to find a way forward. We welcome the separate meetings, expected to be held on 26 October, among negotiators from each side and Quartet envoys and the Quartet representative to agree on a method for proceeding in the negotiation. Special Coordinator Serry will participate in those meetings, and is in close dialogue with the parties in preparation for them. We remind the parties that the Quartet reaffirmed the international legal basis for peace talks and

called for the parties to overcome the obstacles and resume negotiations without preconditions. The Quartet further called for proposals within three months on borders and security, with a view to achieving substantial progress within six months and an agreement no later than the end of 2012. The Quartet stressed the need for the parties to refrain from provocations and reiterated their road map obligations.

In that regard, we have registered our deep concern about Israel's settlement actions. The Israeli announcement of 1,100 East Jerusalem settlement units on the day that the Council last met was followed by the announcement, on 10 October, of 11 new housing units in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Pisgat Zeev. On 11 October, the Israeli authorities significantly advanced plans for the construction of approximately 2,600 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hamatos, which would amount to a new settlement in an area of vital importance for the viability of a two-State outcome.

The Israeli authorities are also not acting effectively against the construction of illegal outposts on private Palestinian land. On 14 October, the Secretary-General made clear that those developments were unacceptable and ran counter to the Quartet's call and Israel's commitments under the road map. I would remind the Council that settlement activity is illegal under international law and should cease. Unilateral actions on the ground will not be recognized by the international community.

At the same time, restrictions continue on land allocation and planning for Palestinian construction in Area C and East Jerusalem. Demolitions by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Area C during the reporting period displaced 145 people, including 81 children. We remain concerned

about plans to relocate approximately 2,300 Bedouins in the vicinity of the so-called E1-corridor connecting East Jerusalem to West Bank settlements.

The Palestinian application for United Nations membership is being examined by the Security Council, and is a matter for Member States. Also, the Palestinian request for membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is being reviewed before a vote by the General Conference. That step could have repercussions for the organization, as it has legal and political implications for the funding provided by some Member States. The Secretary-General is increasingly concerned about ramifications of such a step for the United Nations as a whole, and asks all involved to act wisely in determining a course of action. Regardless of those developments, a negotiated two-State solution, to which both leaders are committed, must remain the highest priority.

In the West Bank, both the application for statehood and the prisoner release evoked significant public demonstrations, but few acts of violence. Demonstrations against the barrier, which deviates from the Green Line in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, also largely remained peaceful. Coordination between the parties remains essential to maintain a secure environment.

However, tensions and violent incidents continue. Settler attacks on Palestinians resulted in one death and 19 injuries, including to five Palestinian children. Violent settlers especially targeted Palestinians harvesting their olive groves, and damaged 664 trees. Settlers also attacked an IDF patrol vehicle on 5 October, resulting in light injuries to an Israeli soldier. I urge the Israeli authorities to take decisive actions against acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli citizens. I also note

that, on 3 October in Israel, a mosque was set on fire in the Upper Galilee village of Tuba Zangaria. That triggered unrest, vandalism and the arrest of local residents, as well as the subsequent desecration of Muslim, Christian and Jewish holy sites and property in several towns in Israel.

Palestinian attacks on Israelis in the occupied West Bank resulted in two injuries, including the stabbing of an Israeli child on 22 October, as well as extensive material damage, mostly from stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles. On 6 October, hundreds of Israeli pilgrims accompanied by IDF in the Palestinian city of Nablus discovered swastikas painted on the exterior walls of Joseph's Tomb. On the same day, Israeli authorities arrested five Palestinians in connection with the stoning of a vehicle travelling in the West Bank on 23 September, which caused the death of the Israeli driver and his infant son.

Turning to Gaza, in spite of the fragile relative calm, six indiscriminate rockets and 13 mortar shells were fired by Palestinian militants into Israel during this reporting period, while two IDF incursions and five air strikes resulted in injuries to three Palestinian militants and two Palestinian civilians. We call for an end to militant rocket fire into Israel, maximum Israeli restraint and respect by all parties for international humanitarian law.

I echo the Secretary-General's expressed hope that the prisoner exchange will be followed by more far-reaching steps to end the closure of Gaza. Those steps should be taken within the framework of the full implementation of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), and in close coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

In spite of the recent economic growth and the drop in unemployment in Gaza, the sustainability of that progress is unclear.

Significant parts of the population remain food insecure and rely on humanitarian assistance. While agencies are implementing approved projects, ongoing restrictions limit the ability of the United Nations to support Gaza's economic recovery and reconstruction. There is a worrisome humanitarian and development vacuum that is being filled by other actors, fuelled by an illicit tunnel trade largely controlled by the de facto authorities.

That situation presents genuine concerns with regard to prospects for the emergence of a viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, and deepens the Palestinian divide. We reiterate our call on Israel for more far-reaching steps to ease its land closures and facilitate the entry of construction materials into Gaza, exports and the free movement of people in both directions, with due consideration for Israel's legitimate security concerns. We also reiterate our call for weapons smuggling to be brought under control.

Notwithstanding inter-factional contacts, there has been no concrete progress towards the further implementation of the May reconciliation agreement. We reiterate our support for Palestinian reconciliation within the framework of Quartet principles, Palestine Liberation Organization commitments and the Arab Peace Initiative.

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Turning back to the Israeli-Palestinian peace, let me conclude by emphasizing our deep concern about the impasse between the parties and its potential implications for the future. Leadership is urgently needed and the moderate Palestinian leadership must be supported. The parties must refrain from provocation and should stand ready to offer serious proposals on borders and security for negotiation. We urge them to approach their

meetings with the Quartet envoys later this week in that spirit. Otherwise, the impasse will only deepen, and with it the level of confrontation and the scale of mistrust. The international community must stand ready to play an active role in helping to steer the

situation towards an agreement that resolves all final status issues, ends the occupation that began in 1967, ends the conflict and creates an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel within secure and recognized borders.

IX. UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION ADMITS PALESTINE AS MEMBER STATE

On 29 October 2011, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), under agenda item 9.1 of its thirty-sixth session in Paris, adopted a resolution on the admission of Palestine to UNESCO. The text of the resolution is reproduced below with an indication of the vote.

Request for the admission of Palestine to UNESCO

The General Conference,

Considering the request for admission of Palestine to UNESCO submitted in 1989, and reiterated at each session of the General Conference,

Having noted that Palestine accepts UNESCO's Constitution and is ready to fulfill the obligations which will devolve

upon it by virtue of its admission and to contribute towards the expenses of the Organization,

Having noted that the Executive Board, at its 187th session, recommended the admission of Palestine to membership of UNESCO,

Decides to admit Palestine as a member of UNESCO.

*Thirty-sixth session
29 October 2011
Adopted by 107 votes to 14,
with 52 abstentions.*

X. SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

The following statement was issued on 30 October 2011 by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General (SG/SM/13912):

The Secretary-General has been following with deep concern the recent escalation of violence and bloodshed in southern Israel and Gaza. He condemns rocket fire from Gaza, which has killed an Israeli civilian, and calls for its complete cessation. He urges maximum

Israeli restraint following the killing of a reported 10 alleged militants. He hopes that the parties will fully respect the calm as brokered by Egypt. The Office of the Special Coordinator on the ground remains actively engaged in supporting these efforts.