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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
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I. THE OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS REPORTS ON DISPLACEMENT AND INSECURITY IN AREA C OF THE WEST BANK

On 1 August 2011, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued a Special Focus report entitled: "Displacement and insecurity in Area C of the West Bank". Excerpts of the executive summary of the report are reproduced below.

Executive summary

Introduction

In spring 2011, OCHA carried out a series of field visits to 13 Palestinian communities located in Area C, the over 60 per cent of the West Bank where Israel retains control over security and the planning and building sphere. These visits focused on the issue of displacement from Palestinian communities.

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The total Palestinian population of Area C is estimated at around 150,000, two-thirds of whom live in localities which are partly located in Area A and B, and one-third in communities located entirely in Area C. This report focuses on the latter, which generally face more severe humanitarian and protection needs, compared to those that are only partially located in Area C. Of those living entirely in Area C, approximately 18,500 live in small, sedentary villages and 27,500 reside in Bedouin and other herding communities, many in remote areas.

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Main findings

The findings, along with field observations, highlight worrying trends regarding the displacement of Palestinians in Area C and demonstrate the significant extent to which others are at risk of

displacement. In particular, the following emerged:

- **Clear patterns of displacement are occurring in the Area C communities visited, with residents being forced to move in order to meet their basic needs.**

Ten of the communities reported that families are moving out of their communities. The single most common reason causing people to move stems from the restrictive planning regime applied by the Israeli authorities in Area C, which makes it virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain permission to build; in many cases, it is due to a combination of other factors, such as settler violence, movement restrictions, including the barrier, reduced income, demolitions, or difficult access to services/resources (e.g. education, water, etc). Displaced families are moving to Areas A and B as well as to other parts of Area C. Thousands of others are at risk of displacement due to the same factors.

- **Israeli policies and practices in Area C are undermining livelihoods among the herding and agriculture-based communities visited, contributing to displacement.**

Eleven of the 13 communities visited by OCHA reported that their sources of livelihood have eroded over the past 10 years, as a result of Israeli practices in Area C. For example, Bedouin and other herders consistently reported reduced herd sizes and farmers reported deteriorated access and ability to cultivate agricultural land. Both cases are due to Israeli authorities' restrictions on land use,

access to water resources and ongoing settlement activity.

- **Israeli settlements and the impunity surrounding settler activity are central to the range of hardships forcing many families to leave the visited communities.** Ten of the 13 communities identified factors related to Israeli settlement activity as key to the difficulties they are facing on a daily basis; six communities reported that they regularly face physical violence and other harassment from Israeli settlers, while these communities and the remaining ones identified other settlement-related problems, particularly restrictions on access and land use due to settlements. Almost all interviewed residents noted that while the development of their communities has been restricted in the past 10 years, adjacent Israeli settlements have continued to develop in contravention of international law.

- **Many of the residents report living in a state of pervasive insecurity and instability due to administrative practices implemented by the Israeli authorities.** In each of the communities visited, this feeling of insecurity was extremely evident with multiple residents commenting on its effect on day-to-day life and the extent of its impact on the psychosocial health of community members, particularly children. This is particularly true for refugee communities, many of which often express feelings of helplessness over having been displaced multiple times since their original displacement in 1948.

In the majority of these communities, interviewees noted that their day-to-day life has deteriorated in significant ways compared to that of the previous generation, particularly with regard to the level of security, freedom of movement and access

to livelihoods and services. Residents also reported that the level of difficulty these factors cause in daily life is shaping major life choices; for example, a number of communities indicated that one criterion being used to evaluate marriage proposals is where the prospective spouse resides.

Of the 13 communities visited by OCHA, four have experienced demolitions by the Israeli authorities since the time of their interview: Khirbet Yarza, Susiya, Al Hadidiya and KHALLET Sakariya. An additional community, Wadi Abu Hindi, has received tens of stop-work and demolition orders that have put most structures in the community at risk of imminent demolition.

Irrespective of the motivation behind the various policies applied by Israel to Area C, their effect on the visited communities has been to make development virtually impossible, to impose living conditions that are untenable for many and to prevent residents from earning a sustainable livelihood.

The difficulties raised by residents of the 13 communities are consistent with those highlighted by other Area C communities, about which OCHA and partner agencies regularly report (e.g. inability to build, movement and access restrictions, settler violence, etc.). Based on the recent field visits, along with our monitoring of Area C communities over the past several years, OCHA is concerned that trends identified in this report impact other Area C communities. This underlines the need for additional research on displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory with a view to better understanding the full extent of the population affected.

Given the small size of the most vulnerable communities visited, there are

real concerns that in the absence of concrete policy changes in Area C, along with a significant influx of support, some of these communities may disintegrate and disappear altogether over the course of the next generation, or sooner. This possibility, along with the other patterns of Palestinian displacement and Israeli settlement activity in Area C, give rise to concerns over demographic shifts and changes to the ethnic make-up of the West Bank.

The way forward

The humanitarian community in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is working to meet the most urgent needs of Area C communities. These interventions, however, are limited, with humanitarian organizations facing many of the same difficulties confronting Palestinian communities, particularly restrictive planning and zoning regulations. For example, tents provided by the international community to house poor families displaced following the demolition of their homes have been targeted with demolition orders by the Israeli authorities. Even the most successful humanitarian intervention, however, will be unable to resolve the core issues creating the pattern of displacement highlighted during OCHA's recent field visits. Only substantive changes to policies and practices applied by the Israeli authorities in Area C can do so. The humanitarian community, including senior United Nations officials, has repeatedly raised the urgency of making such changes to its Israeli counterparts on all levels, particularly with regard to the demolition of structures. Despite highlighting the negative humanitarian impact of policies applied by the Israeli authorities in Area C on vulnerable Palestinian communities, there has been no significant change on either a policy-level or in the day-to-day practices of the Israeli authorities.

As the occupying Power, Israel is responsible under international humanitarian law for administering its occupation in a manner that benefits the local Palestinian population. Likewise, under international human rights law, Israel must ensure that persons under its jurisdiction enjoy fulfillment of their human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination, to effective legal remedies, and an adequate standard of living, housing, health, education and water. With particular reference to Bedouin communities, international law guarantees that their unique way of life as indigenous persons must be respected and protected.

There are a range of measures that would benefit the local Palestinian population and facilitate Israel's progress towards meeting its obligations under international law, including:

- End the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including immediately ceasing demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, including housing, schools, livelihood structures and rainwater collection cisterns, until Palestinians have access to a fair and nondiscriminatory zoning and planning regime, including community participation in all levels of the process.
- Families that have been forcibly displaced must be allowed to return to their homes in safety and dignity, and be given access to an effective remedy for any harm they have suffered, including the destruction of land, homes and property.

- Stop facilitating the transfer of Israeli civilians into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including by freezing all settlement activity in accordance with the road map.
- Investigate and prosecute all forms of violence and intimidation by Israeli settlers in an independent, impartial, effective, thorough and prompt manner.
- Improve Palestinian access and movement in the West Bank, particularly to land and resources in the Jordan Valley, to areas behind the barrier, to land in the vicinity of Israeli settlements, and to land designated closed for military training or as nature reserves.
- In decisions regarding the use of “state land” and water resources, priority should be given to the most vulnerable Palestinian communities in Area C; “state land” should not be allocated for the use of Israeli settlements.
- Implement measures that assist Bedouin communities in sustaining their traditional lifestyles. Decisions

regarding these communities should be made only with the consultation, participation and acceptance of community members themselves.

- Stop all barrier construction, dismantle or reroute the constructed sections to the Green Line, and repeal the gate and permit regime in compliance with the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.
- Enable the humanitarian community to meet basic humanitarian needs in Area C (e.g. erecting a tent, rehabilitating a well, etc.) in accordance with the humanitarian imperative, without fear of prosecution or other recrimination to either agencies or beneficiaries by the Israeli authorities.

Further measures are encouraged from the Palestinian Authority, with the assistance of the donor community, to increase their support to Area C locales, particularly Bedouin and herding communities, which struggle to sustain both their livelihoods and their presence on their land, in the midst of the difficulties outlined in this report.

II. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ISSUES STATEMENT ON KILLINGS IN QALANDIYA REFUGEE CAMP

The following statement was issued on 1 August 2011 by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process:

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, is deeply concerned that two Palestinians were killed by the Israel Defense Force in Qalandiya Refugee Camp earlier today during an operation which they

conducted citing security reasons. Five Israeli soldiers were also injured.

The Special Coordinator calls upon the Israeli authorities to exercise maximum restraint and thoroughly investigate the incident. He also emphasizes the need for calm from all sides.

III. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ALARMED BY SETTLEMENT PLANS IN EAST JERUSALEM

The following statement was issued on 11 August 2011 by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert H. Serry:

The United Nations Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, is alarmed by the announcement today by the Government of Israel to develop new housing units in East Jerusalem, including 1,600 units in Ramat Shlomo which was already condemned by the Quartet on 12 March 2010 during an initial planning stage. If confirmed, this provocative action undermines ongoing efforts by the international community to

bring the parties back to negotiations and shape a positive agenda for September. This announcement comes only one week after a separate decision by the Government of Israel regarding the construction of additional housing units in another settlement in East Jerusalem which was widely criticized by the international community. The Special Coordinator will engage with Quartet partners on the issue.

IV. QUARTET GREATLY CONCERNED OVER SETTLEMENT PLANS IN EAST JERUSALEM

The following statement was issued on 16 August 2011 by the Quartet (SG/2176):

The Quartet is greatly concerned by Israel's recent announcements to advance planning for new housing units in Ariel and East Jerusalem, and reiterates its position in this regard, in particular its statement of 12 March 2010. The Quartet reaffirms that unilateral action by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community. Jerusalem in particular is one of the core issues that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties, which underscores the urgent need for the parties

to resume serious and substantive talks. This comes at a critical juncture with Quartet efforts ongoing to resume negotiations which are the only way to a just and durable solution to the conflict.

The Quartet is determined to pursue its efforts. Ultimately, it is up to Israeli and Palestinian leaders to make tough decisions and avoid actions by their Governments that undermine the very goals they and we are trying to achieve.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS DEADLY ATTACKS IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

The following is the text of the statement issued on 18 August 2011 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (SG/SM/13748):

The Secretary-General strongly condemns today's coordinated terror attacks in southern Israel. He expresses his condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured.

The Secretary-General hopes that the perpetrators are swiftly identified and brought to justice. He is concerned at the risk of escalation and calls for all to act with restraint.

**VI. BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY**

On 19 August 2011, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People adopted the following statement on the upsurge in Israeli settlement activity. (GA/PAL/1209):

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is deeply alarmed by the upsurge in illegal Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including occupied East Jerusalem, since the beginning of August. On 4 August, the Israeli Government gave its approval for the construction of an additional 900 settlement units in the illegal settlement of “Har Homa” in Jabal Abu Ghneim in occupied East Jerusalem. “Har Homa’s” location severs Bethlehem from East Jerusalem, inhibiting travel and territorial continuity between Palestinian towns and neighbourhoods. Notwithstanding the widespread condemnation of this provocative measure by the international community, the Israeli Government proceeded on 11 August to approve the construction of 1,600 more housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of “Ramat Shlomo”. This was followed on 15 August by the approval granted to build 277 settler apartments in the “Ariel” settlement block, which encroaches over 20 kilometres into the West Bank. The Israeli Interior Ministry also announced that in the coming days, another 2,700 units will be approved in the illegal settlements of “Pisgat Zeev” and “Givat Hamatos”. This would bring the number of new settlement units approved in occupied East Jerusalem to over 5,200 in August alone, reflecting the intensity of continuing Israeli settlement expansion and construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Bureau strongly condemns these illegal and provocative acts by the

occupying Power, undertaken with the aim to encircle and separate East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory behind a wall of settlements. They also cement Israeli control over the West Bank by fragmenting it in ways which would render a viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State impossible to achieve in accordance with the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The Bureau calls on Israel to immediately cease and reverse these unilateral actions, freeze all settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the so-called “natural growth”, and dismantle outposts erected since 2001, obligations Israel undertook in accordance with the Road Map.

The Bureau also wishes to underscore that all settlements, including those in East Jerusalem, and their associated regime, such as the appropriations of Palestinian land and water, closures, checkpoints, demolitions, evictions and the separation wall, are illegal under international humanitarian law and amount to grave violations of the human rights of the Palestinians. Settlements also constitute serious impediments to the socio-economic development of the Palestinians and exacerbate their humanitarian hardship. The Bureau is particularly alarmed by the continued impunity enjoyed by settlers who commit provocative and violent acts against Palestinian civilians, including children, and their properties, especially agricultural lands and religious sites. It calls on Israel to take

credible action to prevent and punish such acts.

Recent Israeli settlement announcements undermine international efforts aimed at bringing the parties back to negotiations. They have a corrosive effect on confidence and undermine goodwill, absent which serious and genuine permanent status negotiations are unlikely to succeed. The issue of settlements, as well as that of Jerusalem, are among the six core issues to be negotiated by the parties. All unilateral actions by Israel which prejudge the outcome of negotiations by creating faits accomplis on the ground have no legal

validity and will not be recognized by the international community.

While welcoming the recent expressions of concern by the Quartet and other members of the international community, the Bureau calls for credible and decisive action to compel Israel to abide by its legal obligations and to protect Palestinian civilians under prolonged military occupation from the damaging effects of settlements and settlers. The Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions bear a special responsibility in this regard.

VII. QUARTET CONDEMNS ATTACKS IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

The following statement was issued on 20 August 2011 by the Quartet (SG/2177):

The Quartet condemns the attacks in southern Israel on 18 August 2011 and all acts of terrorism in the strongest terms. These are cowardly acts of premeditated terrorism. The Quartet hopes those involved in the planning and conduct of these gruesome attacks will quickly be brought to justice.

The Quartet remains concerned about the unsustainable situation in Gaza as well as the risk of escalation, and calls for

restraint from all sides. The Quartet also expresses its concern about the security situation in the Sinai Peninsula. Recent commitments by the Egyptian Government to address the security situation in the Sinai are important, and the Quartet encourages the Egyptian Government to find a lasting resolution to the issue of Sinai security.

The Quartet extends its deepest condolences to the victims, their families and loved ones.

VIII. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 23 August 2011, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) issued its annual report on assistance to the Palestinian People. The executive Summary of the report is reproduced below:

Executive summary

While the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory grew by 7.4 per cent in

2009 and 9.3 per cent in 2010, unemployment remained high, at 30 per cent in both years. The growth was driven by donor support, and reflects an economy

recovering from a low base. Economic growth has not altered the reality of worsening long-term development prospects, caused by the ongoing loss of Palestinian land and natural resources, isolation from global markets, and fragmentation. Unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, especially in Gaza, continue to be alarming.

The Palestinian Authority's fiscal position remains precarious, despite recent improvements. A large trade deficit and dependence on the Israeli economy persist. New evidence suggests that the trade deficit

with Israel is overstated by official data, which mask "indirect imports". The tax revenue on such indirect imports, currently lost, could increase Palestinian public revenue by 25 per cent. Meanwhile, the economic ramifications of the severance of East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory call for serious attention too. In spite of limited resources, UNCTAD continues to respond to the needs of the Palestinian economy in coordination with other United Nations organizations and donors, and has recently commenced a new project to "strengthen Palestinian trade-facilitation capacity".

IX. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS CALLS ON ALL SIDES TO PREVENT FURTHER ESCALATION IN GAZA AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL

The following statement was issued on 25 August 2011 by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process:

The United Nations Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, expresses his deep concern that the recently re-established calm in Gaza and southern Israel is at risk due to the continuation of incidents, and deplores the loss of civilian lives. In the interest of protecting the lives of civilians

and for the calm to succeed, a complete halt to the firing of rockets from Gaza and a display of maximum restraint by Israel is required. Mr. Serry calls on all sides to immediately take steps to prevent any further escalation.

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

On 25 August 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. Excerpts of the briefing are reproduced below (S/PV.6602).

Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and establishing an independent and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, are long overdue. In a rapidly changing regional context, serious progress towards that goal is

urgent. The deadlines that were set a year ago with respect to resolving all permanent status issues and completing the Palestinian State-building agenda are upon us. However, despite continued efforts to assist Israel and the Palestinians in finding a way

back to the negotiating table, the political deadlock persists. Differences remain profound between the parties regarding what terms should frame negotiations, and mistrust is deepening.

The status quo is unsustainable and damaging to both sides. In a stark reminder of the fragility of the situation, the recent period witnessed a serious escalation of violence marked by terrorist attacks targeting several civilian vehicles and one military vehicle in southern Israel on 18 August. The coordinated attacks resulted in the death of eight Israelis, including two soldiers and six civilians. Egyptian security forces cooperated with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) on their side of the border to counter the attacks. However, five Egyptian security personnel died in the operation.

Citing intelligence attributing the attacks to a Palestinian group based in Gaza, Israel conducted 45 air strikes on Gaza that killed 19 Palestinians, including 3 civilians. Thirty Palestinians, including at least 10 militants, were also injured. The IDF also conducted search operations in Hebron in the West Bank, reportedly arresting about 120 Hamas members and injuring 55 Palestinians. Gaza militants indiscriminately fired more than 100 rockets and projectiles into Israel, killing 1 Israeli civilian and injuring 27.

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The Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process was actively engaged and supported important efforts to restore the calm out of Gaza that had prevailed since April. Special Coordinator Serry visited Cairo on 21 August to work closely with the Egyptian Government in this regard and met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Chief of

Intelligence. A fragile calm was restored earlier this week, but we remain concerned by the risk of escalation. In this context, we reiterate that the cessation of hostilities is a key element of progress towards the implementation of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). The militants' indiscriminate firing of rockets towards civilian areas is unacceptable, and the Secretary-General has consistently condemned such acts. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all sides to act with restraint.

Preserving calm is all the more important to give ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at resuming meaningful negotiations a chance. The Secretary-General has continued to encourage the parties to overcome their differences and to support Quartet engagement in this regard. However, with no political breakthrough and with Israeli settlement activity continuing, the Palestinian leadership confirmed its intentions to approach the United Nations in September. On 28 July, the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee announced its support for the leadership's intention to go to the General Assembly and the Security Council. On 4 August, the Arab Peace Initiative Committee announced the Arab League's plan to call on United Nations Member States to recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to move to submit an application for full United Nations membership. The Committee confirmed its decision at its meeting on 23 August. The Government of Israel has reiterated its opposition to Palestinian action in the United Nations. We continue to hope that the international community will be able to shape a legitimate and balanced way forward to help the parties resume meaningful negotiations that will realize the two-State solution.

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The Palestinian Authority also needs to have the financial means to sustain its State-building and reform agenda. Due to shortfalls in donor funding, the Palestinian Authority is experiencing a serious fiscal crisis and needs \$250 million in additional commitments immediately to meet its obligations. We call on the donors to provide timely and generous support.

In a development that is a source of serious concern, the Government of Israel has announced a series of new settlement expansions in the West Bank. In total, some 5,200 units are planned in occupied East Jerusalem. Another 277 units were also approved in the West Bank settlement of Ariel — the largest number approved outside East Jerusalem in a single settlement by the current Government. The Secretary-General reiterated that settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law. On 16 August, the Quartet expressed great concern at these announcements and reiterated its statement of 12 March 2010, which condemned a similar announcement by the Government of Israel. The Quartet also reaffirmed that unilateral action by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.

In a more positive development, on 2 August the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the evacuation of the illegal settlement outpost of Migron, and we look forward to its implementation. The intention of the Government of Israel to relocate some 2,300 Bedouins living in Area C is also worrying. The land where this Bedouin community lives has been allocated for the construction and expansion of the Ma'ale Adumim bloc

of settlements in East Jerusalem. On 22 August, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected an appeal to reroute a section of the barrier around the West Bank village of Al-Walajah, thus enabling construction on a route that risks encircling the village and cutting it off from free access both from East Jerusalem and from the rest of the West Bank.

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The living conditions of the population of the Gaza Strip remain a priority for the United Nations. Imports into Gaza have increased by 12 per cent since our last briefing. This is a step in the right direction. However, restrictions remain in place, limiting improvements in people's livelihoods, which have deteriorated over the three years of closure. To address Gaza's humanitarian needs and rebuild the foundations of its economy, a comprehensive easing of the closure is needed, along with a substantial improvement in the security situation.

We reiterate that humanitarian activity is a mainstay of assistance for over 1 million Gazans, and it is key that humanitarian organizations be able to exercise their functions unhindered and independently. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator has helped to defuse tensions around the closing of a medical non-governmental organization (NGO) in Gaza over its refusal to allow in-house auditing by the de facto Ministry of the Interior. We welcome the reopening of this NGO on 14 August. However we are concerned over new orders by the Gaza de facto authorities that would require staff of civil society groups to register with them to travel outside the Gaza Strip in their official functions.

The 17 August decision of the de facto Ministry of Education to prevent eight students from Gaza from travelling to the United States on scholarships is also of concern and goes contrary to the efforts of the international community to help restore normalcy in Gaza. In another disturbing event on 28 July, armed men attacked and vandalized a United Nations facility used for summer camps for children.

Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit has remained in Hamas captivity since 25 June 2006. I call on his captors to allow humanitarian access to him and to release him without further delay. Indirect talks have reportedly been held between Israel and the Gaza de facto authorities, under Egyptian auspices, towards the conclusion of a prisoner exchange deal, and we hope an agreement can soon be reached.

Fatah and Hamas representatives continue to meet on the implementation of the reconciliation accord agreed in Cairo in May. We continue to support reconciliation efforts within the framework of the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the positions of the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The reconciliation accord envisages that elections will be held following the formation of a technocratic Government of unity. On 22 August, President Abbas issued a decree postponing local elections without setting a new date, stating that conditions should first be in place for the election commission to work in all of the territory. The elections had been set for 22 October.

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