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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-ninth session
Item 8 of the provisional agenda**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE
OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE****Letter dated 30 January 2003 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Israeli occupation forces persist in their war crimes, State-sponsored terrorism and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people. The bloody and vicious military and destructive war being waged by the Israeli occupation forces since September 2000 throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues unabated with mounting casualties and vast devastation in all spheres of Palestinian life.

On 28 January 2003, the Israeli occupation forces, using 20 tanks, entered Jenin city. Jeeps and snipers spilled into civilian neighbourhoods, terrorizing residents by invading their homes and filling their roofs with snipers. During the invasion, four Palestinians were killed and one journalist injured. Those killed are Yousef Saleh Assadi, 20, Mohammed Al Fukaha, 23, Rashad al Arabi, 29, and Nidal Castoni.

Late on the evening of Saturday, 25 January, the Israeli occupation forces committed a new massacre in Gaza City, to be added to the already long list and history of massacres. Israeli forces, using about 50 tanks and armoured vehicles covered by helicopters, entered Hay al-Zaytoun, south of Gaza City, launched a deadly raid, killing at least 12 Palestinians and injuring 67 others. More than 100 buildings were demolished in this invasion.

Among those killed during the raid are Ahmad Hassan al-Fayoumi (24), Mohammad Rashad Abid (28), Ahmad Shadeh Aabid (23), Ashraf Samih Kahil (23), Mohammad Akram al-Nakhaleh (21), Alaa Zuhair Khalifeh (23), Rami Fathi Issa (27), Marwan Zuhair Rahmi (25), Iyyad Bader Jibril Akkawi (20), Wissam Fayeze Yusef Hassan (24), Khaled Ali Hassan Shalouf (17), Amjad al-Hattab (16).

On the same day, in Rafah, a 7-year-old Palestinian boy, Ali Talab Aziz, was murdered by an Israeli soldier who opened fire at him from a tank; his 5-year-old brother Ala was wounded in the attack.

On Friday, 24 January, Israeli forces killed Suad Snoubat Jawdallah (46) and Ayman Henawi, in his twenties, near a bypass road near Nablus city.

At the same time, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to wreak havoc and destruction all throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, demolishing homes and properties and causing extensive damage to vital infrastructure. Indeed, on Tuesday, 21 January, in one of the largest demolitions carried out by the occupying Power, the Israeli occupation forces, using several bulldozers guarded by nearly 300 soldiers, razed 62 shops and market stalls in the Palestinian village of Nazlat Issa in the vicinity of Tulkarem. These criminal practices have left thousands of Palestinians homeless and have destroyed the livelihood of thousands of other Palestinians.

In addition to the massacres, crimes, killings, destruction and collective punishments perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces, the Palestinian people continue to be subjected to ongoing harassment, violence and destruction committed by illegal Israeli settlers. In this regard, on Sunday, 19 January, a group of armed settlers in Al-Khalil attacked several Palestinian homes in the city, breaking windows and property and harassing the Palestinian residents as they rampaged through the area. These armed colonial settlers, living in illegal Israeli settlements on confiscated land throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, have been allowed by the occupying Power to terrorize the Palestinian people and to kill, destroy and steal with impunity.

Prior to the above-mentioned invasions, the Israeli military ordered the closure of all Palestinian cities in advance of the Israeli election - preventing 3.6 million Palestinians from moving freely between towns and cities in the West Bank.

Since 19 January 2003, curfew and closure cripple West Bank residents. Some areas of the West Bank such as Nablus and its surrounding villages, Tulkarem, Hebron, Bethlehem and its surrounding villages, Jenin and Qalqilya, have been under curfew for what amounts to 214 days since June 2001, depriving residents of the right to freely move about on their streets, attend school or obtain medical care.

Palestinian civilians have been under virtual house arrest on and off for months in a policy of collective punishment seemingly designed to increase despair amongst the Palestinian population, and escalate the already drastic deterioration of health conditions resulting from the Israeli military's complete prohibition on movement between cities and villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Eighty-three Palestinians have died at checkpoints awaiting access to medical care such as kidney dialysis or emergency care for heart attacks. Furthermore, 36 babies have been born at checkpoints as their mothers were denied access to hospitals.

I regret to inform you that as a result of the increasing number of Palestinians who continue to be killed and injured at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces with every passing day, the toll of Palestinian martyrs since September 2000 increased to at least 2,088 and at least 21,603 others wounded, most of them sustaining severe and permanent disabilities.

In light of the continued campaign of war, bloodshed and destruction being waged by the Israeli occupation authorities, forces and settlers in all Palestinian towns, villages and camps, we once again reiterate our call to Your Excellency to call on Israel to take immediate action to stop its massacres, murder, all the atrocities and heinous crimes being committed against the Palestinian people, house demolitions, continued confiscation of Palestinian property, to abide by international law, to ensure that fundamental human rights are protected and to put an end to all its violations of the principles of international law, international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We also appeal to Your Excellency to use all your offices to provide international protection to protect the Palestinian protected persons until Israel has withdrawn its forces from all the Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem.

I would be most grateful if you could arrange to have this letter distributed to the members of the Commission on Human Rights as an official document of

the fifty-ninth session of the Commission under its agenda item 8.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
