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## **Briefing notes on Occupied Palestinian territory / West Bank**

Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Rupert Colville

Location: Geneva

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### **(1) Occupied Palestinian territory / West Bank**

The UN 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 IDF unit. Palestinians from this village have in the past already lost access to hundreds of acres of land due to settlement expansion and 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 two hundred 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 UN human rights office in the occupied Palestinian territory in cooperation with various other United Nations entities.

We call on 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 they 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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For more information or media requests, please contact spokesperson Rupert Colville (+41 22 917 9767 / [rcolville@ohchr.org](mailto:rcolville@ohchr.org)) or press officers Ravina Shamdasani (+41 22 917 9310 / [rshamdasani@ohchr.org](mailto:rshamdasani@ohchr.org)) and Xabier Celaya (+41 22 917 9383 / [xcelaya@ohchr.org](mailto:xcelaya@ohchr.org)).

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