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FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS  
Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee  
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**Executive Summary**

The reporting period was characterized by heightened violence that took place against a backdrop of growing concern that the current negative trends on the ground — including, *inter alia*, ongoing settlement and related activity, incitement to violence, and the absence of genuine Palestinian unity — are imperiling the viability of a two-state solution. The international community led by the Middle East Quartet, continued its efforts to establish an environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations to end the conflict. At the operational level, initiatives were led by the Israeli and Palestinian finance ministers to explore ways to revive the Palestinian economy and improve the day-to-day lives of Palestinians, and by Israeli and Palestinian officials on Palestinian security control over Area A. Progress towards peace was slowed, on the Israeli side, *inter alia* by continued settlement activity, and declaration of land in the West Bank as State Land. On the Palestinian side, despite continuing national reconciliation discussions held in February and March in Qatar, Palestinian factions have been unable to reach consensus on achieving genuine Palestinian unity, on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the PLO Principles.

A protracted humanitarian crisis prevails in the occupied Palestinian territory. Some 1.1 million people in the West Bank and some 1.3 million people in Gaza, over 900,000 of them refugees, need some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016. In the West Bank increased restrictions on movement, particularly stringent in Hebron and East Jerusalem at the height of the recent violence, disrupted livelihoods and service delivery, worsening the humanitarian crisis. In Gaza the negative effects of the closure was exacerbated by the inability of the Government of National Consensus (GNC) to take up its full governance responsibility, adding further stresses to an already-vulnerable population. Nineteen months after the ceasefire, some 75,000 people remained displaced waiting for the reconstruction of their homes. Despite some relaxation by Israeli authorities on movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, a range of measures continue to make it difficult for Palestinians in Gaza, including those in need of medical treatment, to travel out of the Strip.

The human rights situation deteriorated in the reporting period with a rise in clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli Security Forces, increased instances of punitive measures against families of alleged perpetrators of attacks and the ongoing practice of administrative detentions. The United Nations calls for the calibrated use of force, clear rules of engagement for security forces in line with international law and standards, and robust systems of accountability and redress.

Demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures more than doubled in the reporting period as compared with the previous six months. This included punitive demolitions of the family homes of perpetrators of attacks against Israelis and a manifold increase in demolition of donor-funded structures. The United Nations repeatedly called for an immediate freeze on such practices. Total demolitions by mid-April already exceeded the total recorded in all of 2015.

A number of key development indicators are cause for concern. Severely limited Palestinian access to land and natural resources in Area C continues to constrain economic development and hinder private investment. No new outline plan in Area C has been approved in the reporting period. The unemployment situation remains dire. High unemployment rates and a lack of a political horizon, particularly in Gaza, risks fueling radicalization of youth and creating an even more unstable situation. The current rate and pattern of growth will not create sufficient jobs for Palestine's growing labour force. Employment generation needs to be mainstreamed in the Palestine Government's new National Policy Agenda and sectoral strategies. Israel needs to ease the physical, material and political constraints to employment generation, *inter alia* by easing movement and access restrictions and further enabling trade by Palestine, especially from Gaza.

Steady progress has been made on the reconstruction of Gaza. More than 90 per cent of health and education facilities damaged or destroyed during the conflict in 2014 have been repaired. Repair of the water infrastructure and housing repairs has also seen progress, whereas housing reconstruction — where the hostilities rendered houses uninhabitable — has been slower. Structural barriers however continue to impede recovery. Investment in the recovery of the productive sectors has also lagged. Funding shortfalls are delaying reconstruction; donors need to disburse Cairo pledges and allocate new funds to enable Gaza's reconstruction and recovery to continue at pace.

The GRM has enabled a significant increase in the entry of construction material to Gaza, but only a lifting of the closures and reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian Authority, will allow the people in Gaza to fully rebuild their lives and livelihoods. In the short term, it is critical that the dual-use list be reviewed and revised.

The chronic shortages of energy and water in Gaza are particularly urgent. Gaza's coastal aquifer will become saline this year and contamination has rendered Gaza's groundwater unusable. Gaza's water crisis cannot be solved without tackling the energy crisis. Until natural gas can be delivered to Gaza's power plant, additional energy needs to be imported from Israel. This requires a high voltage (e.g. 161kv) line. There is also a need for an immediate, substantial increase of fresh water supply from Israel, until long term solutions, such as the full construction and operation of desalination plants, can be implemented.

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