



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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on action by the United Nations system and
intergovernmental organizations
relevant to the question of Palestine

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. UN Humanitarian Coordinator issues statement on Israel's continued practice of administrative detention	1
II. UN Secretary-General transmits report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People	1
III. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issues statement on the health of Palestinian hunger striker Bilal Kiyad	3
IV. UN Secretary-General submits his report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine	3
V. UN Deputy Special Coordinator issues statement on the upcoming local council elections in Palestine	10
VI. UN Deputy Special Coordinator briefs the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	11
VII. UN Secretary-General submits his report on Israeli practices affecting Palestinian human rights	13

Contents (cont'd)

	<i>Page</i>
VIII. UN Secretary-General's delivers video message to 2016 United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East	15

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I. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S CONTINUED PRACTICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

On 20 August 2016, the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance and Development Aid in the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#):

I am deeply concerned about the deteriorating health of Palestinian detainee Bilal Kayed, after 67 days of a hunger strike protesting his detention without charge or trial. This is an egregious case, in which Mr. Kayed was placed on administrative detention on the day of his scheduled release after completing a 14.5 year prison sentence.

Six other detainees, including journalist Omar Nazzal, are also on hunger strike in protest against their

administrative detention and prolonged solitary confinement. A further 100 Palestinian prisoners in prisons across Israel have undertaken hunger strikes in solidarity.

The number of administrative detainees is at an eight-year high. I reiterate the United Nations long-standing position that all administrative detainees – Palestinian or Israeli – should be charged or released without delay.”

II. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TRANSMITS REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 23 August 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon transmitted to the General Assembly the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The following are the recommendations contained in the report ([A/71/352](#)):

95. The Special Committee calls upon the Government of Israel:

(a) To implement all prior recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Committee to the General Assembly, and to facilitate access by the Special Committee to enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(b) To end its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, as well as the occupied Syrian Golan, in compliance with Security Council resolutions [242](#) (1967) and [497](#) (1981);

(c) To lift the illegal land and sea blockade imposed on Gaza for the past nine years and open up opportunities for trade and increasing movement of

Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank;

(d) To cease all settlement activity and construction of the separation wall in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which contravenes international law and undermines the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people;

(e) To immediately stop demolitions pending the introduction of a planning and zoning regime that fully complies with international law and the rights of the Palestinian people. All Palestinians in Area C, including Palestine refugees, must have access to a fair and participatory planning and zoning system that is designed to advance the interests and address the needs of the protected population;

(f) To take all measures to prevent violence perpetrated by settlers, including attacks or harassment against Palestinians and their property, contributing to the creation of an unsustainable living environment, and ensure that such incidents are investigated and those responsible held accountable for the crimes committed;

(g) To take all necessary precautionary measures to ensure that civilians are not harmed during military incursions into and around Palestine refugee camps, including by planning and conducting such operations in a manner that safeguards human life and the safety of the protected population and ensuring that Israeli security forces act proportionally and with restraint in accordance with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;

(h) To rescind all demolition, eviction and seizure orders that are likely to lead to the forcible transfer of Bedouin communities in the occupied West Bank, which affects their pastoralist lifestyle, leading to the breakdown of their traditional economies and damaging their distinct social fabric;

(i) To facilitate access to medical treatment for injured Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(j) To systematically investigate all cases of rampant and excessive use of force that have led to death or serious injury;

(k) To conduct a prompt, thorough, transparent and independent investigation into all cases of alleged extrajudicial executions and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice;

(l) To ensure the protection necessary for the Palestinian civilian population and human rights defenders

engaged in the promotion of human rights issues affecting the Occupied Palestinian Territory and allow them to carry out their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment;

(m) To fully investigate attacks and threats against human rights defenders and ensure that those responsible are held accountable;

(n) To release the bodies of the Palestinians that have not yet been returned to their relatives as soon as possible in order to bring dignified closure in accordance with their religious beliefs and traditions;

(o) To end the practice of punitive demolitions of Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is inhumane, has no deterrent effect and constitutes a form of collective punishment prohibited under international law;

(p) To enable Palestinians and other Arabs to develop and exploit their oil and natural gas reserves, including in offshore locations within the territories occupied since 1967, and halt the exploitation of Palestinian resources.

96. The Special Committee also calls upon the international community:

(a) To ensure that financial pledges made by donor countries in Cairo for the reconstruction of Gaza are honoured and urgently disbursed so that the humanitarian situation is eased;

(b) To use its influence to end the blockade of Gaza, which has a significant detrimental effect on Palestinians;

(c) To review national policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures in relation to business activity to ensure that they effectively serve to prevent and address the heightened risk of

human rights abuses in conflict-affected areas;

(d) To ensure that corporations respect human rights and cease to fund or enter into commercial transactions with organizations and bodies involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories;

(e) To give effect to its legal obligations, as contained in the 2004

[advisory opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice, on the wall;

(f) To address Israel's long track record of non-cooperation with the United Nations, in particular regarding the implementation of resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and mechanisms established by the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies.

III. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE HEALTH OF PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKER BILAL KIYAD

On 23 August 2016, the Spokesperson for United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein issued a [statement](#), of which the following are excerpts:

“We are deeply concerned at the deteriorating health of Bilal Kayed, a 35-year-old Palestinian man, who has been on hunger strike in Israel since 15 June 2016 to protest against his administrative detention. After 70 days of hunger strike, Mr. Kayed is reported to be in a critical condition and doctors have informed him that he may suffer irreversible damage to his health.

Mr. Kayed is one of the at least 700 Palestinians believed to be held in administrative detention in Israel Prison Service facilities.

This is the highest number of administrative detainees at a given time since early 2008.

...

We, once again, urge the Israeli authorities to end their practice of administrative detention and to either release immediately or promptly charge and prosecute all administrative detainees, with all the judicial guarantees required by international human rights law and standards.

IV. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL SUBMITS HIS REPORT ON THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

On 24 August 2016, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon submitted his report entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine” to the General Assembly. The following are the observations contained in the report ([A/71/359-S/2016/732](#)):

7. International efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine continued to focus on creating a framework for the parties' return to meaningful negotiations, in particular through the renewed efforts of the Quartet and other international initiatives. There were no direct peace process-related talks

between the two leaderships, which continued to disagree over the terms for a resumption of formal negotiations.

8. During most of the reporting period, the situation on the ground was characterized by heightened tensions and higher levels of violence than in the

previous year, as well as by a rise in demolitions and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In Gaza, a fragile ceasefire largely held, but the situation remained volatile, mostly owing to worsening socioeconomic conditions, delays in reconstruction, deterioration in the internal security situation, continued restrictions in movement and the deepening political divide between the Palestinian authorities in Gaza and the West Bank.

9. On 10 September, the General Assembly adopted resolution [69/320](#), in which it decided that the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters should be raised at Headquarters and United Nations offices. I witnessed, with the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, the raising of the Palestinian flag for the first time at Headquarters, on 30 September.

10. Over the past year, the Quartet has been actively engaged in seeking a way forward out of the deadlock in negotiations between Israel and the State of Palestine. Quartet envoys held consultations with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and key international partners on how to preserve the two-State solution and establish conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. The determination of those regional partners to play a constructive role was highlighted in all discussions.

11. The Quartet principals met on 30 September in New York, joined by a number of interested regional and international stakeholders, including France, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Arab League. At that meeting, participants expressed serious concern about the trends unfolding on the ground and strong support for taking significant steps that would help to stabilize the

situation, show meaningful progress towards a two-State solution and restore the belief among Palestinians and Israelis that a negotiated peace remained possible. The Quartet principals met on 23 October in Vienna to discuss ways to de-escalate tensions in the aftermath of clashes at holy sites in Jerusalem. On 17 December, Quartet envoys met Israeli and Palestinian officials in Jerusalem and reiterated the urgent need for taking significant steps to strengthen Palestinian institutions, security and economic prospects, while addressing Israel's security concerns. The principals met again on 12 February in Munich, Germany, and agreed that the envoys should prepare a report on the status quo and threats to the two-State solution, including recommendations on the way forward.

12. The report of the Quartet ([S/2016/595](#), annex) was issued on 7 July. In its conclusions, the Quartet noted the three current trends that are dangerously imperilling the viability of a two-State solution: (1) continuing violence, terrorism and incitement; (2) continuing settlement expansion, land designations and denial of Palestinian development; and (3) situation in Gaza and the lack of control of Gaza by the Palestinian Authority. The report contains recommendations for both sides on all three trends with a view to building international consensus on the way forward. Although both sides have criticized the report's content, I urge the parties to engage with the Quartet on its implementation, given that it presents a path to restoring hope for a negotiated settlement.

13. In the report, the Quartet also welcomed the efforts of France to pursue peace as complementary to its own work. On 3 June, I joined the ministerial conference held in Paris to reaffirm the Organization's commitment to a negotiated two-State solution and to discuss how the United Nations can

support constructively both parties in achieving that goal. I welcome the efforts of Egypt in the context of the [Arab Peace Initiative](#), including the visit in July by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt to the State of Palestine and Israel. It is critical to ensure that all international initiatives are closely synchronized with and complementary to the work of the Quartet.

14. My visit to Israel and the State of Palestine on 27 and 28 June aimed at encouraging positive progress in that direction. I urged both leaders to take definitive and courageous steps to restore a political horizon and stressed that continued violence and incitement were incompatible with advancing a negotiated two-State solution.

15. Violence in the West Bank, including in occupied East Jerusalem, increased significantly from October 2015 onward owing to escalating tensions surrounding access to the holy sites. On 13 September, the Israeli police entered the area outside the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount allegedly to head off attempts by extremists to disrupt visits by non-Muslim tourists. Clashes ensued and continued for three days in the compound. Accounts of those incidents were widely shared, across the Muslim world and beyond, with regional and international calls for the preservation of the historic status quo and law and order at the compound, in line with the agreements between Israel and Jordan, as custodian of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

16. The Security Council held an emergency session on 16 October, when the State of Palestine reiterated its request for action to ensure the protection of Palestinians, calling for the implementation of Security Council resolution [904](#) (1994) and all other pertinent resolutions. At the request of Council members, I circulated a compendium, prepared by the Office of

Legal Affairs, of historical examples of territories administered by the League of Nations and the United Nations (see [S/2015/809](#), annex).

17. Subsequent to my visit to the region, on 20 and 21 October, and the meeting between the Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Kerry, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel reiterated Israel's commitment to uphold the status quo with regard to the holy sites, agreeing to strengthen security arrangements with the Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem (Jordanian Waqf). I appreciate the continued role and support of Jordan, as custodian of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

18. High levels of violence and a polarized public discourse across the spectrum in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued throughout the reporting period. Stabbings, vehicle attacks and shootings by Palestinians targeting Israeli civilians and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces continued to claim lives. During the reporting period, a total of 224 Palestinians were killed, 159 of whom were perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks. A total of 16,873 Palestinians were injured (1,518 in Gaza, 15,346 in the West Bank and 9 in Israel), many from smoke inhalation during demonstrations. Thirty-one Israeli civilians and 15 security forces personnel were killed, and 255 Israeli civilians and 89 security forces personnel were injured.

19. The level of force used in countering some of the violence is also a matter of concern. A number of incidents, some of which were captured on video and widely disseminated, call into question the nature of the response of Israeli security forces, including the apparent disproportionate use of lethal force as a first resort. I have consistently reminded

Israeli authorities that live fire should be used only as a last resort, in situations of imminent threat to life or serious injury. It is their duty to ensure a prompt and independent investigation into incidents in which use of force resulted in death or injury and accountability where there is evidence of wrongdoing.

20. I reiterate the firm condemnation by the United Nations of all terrorist attacks. Leaders on all sides have the responsibility to stop incitement and to consistently and unequivocally stand against acts of terror and violence in all forms.

21. Settler violence has decreased since my previous report ([A/70/354-S/2015/677](#)). During the reporting period, there were 145 settler-related incidents that resulted in Palestinian injuries, marking a 5 per cent decrease compared with the previous year. There were 77 settler-related incidents resulting in damage to Palestinian property, also marking a decrease, of 47 per cent, compared with the previous year.

22. Throughout the reporting period, the Israeli Defense Force conducted 4,662 search and arrest operations, resulting in the arrest of 7,013 Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority continued arrests of suspected Hamas affiliates in the West Bank.

23. After almost a year of a so-called “planning freeze” for settlements in 2014, the rates of settlement planning and issuance of tenders for construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem rose in the past year. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities advanced plans for 3,219 housing units in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with 544 of them having reached the final stage of approval. The Government declared 580 acres in the West Bank as “State land” on 10 March 2016. Settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including

East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. The continued making of settlement plans and the retroactive legalizations of settlements signal that Israel’s strategic settlement enterprise continues to expand into land intended for a future Palestinian State.

24. Demolitions of Palestinian homes in Area C of the occupied West Bank continue. The total number of demolitions spiked during the first three months of 2016. During the reporting period, 856 structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of 1,413 Palestinians, including 665 children. Although many of the demolished structures were not dwellings, the loss of water wells, solar panels and animal shelters had an impact on the livelihoods of over 5,120 people. The Bedouin community, in particular, is paying a heavy price. I reiterate the call of the United Nations for an immediate end to those Israeli plans, which, if implemented, may amount to the forcible transfer of the Bedouin communities currently living within the Occupied Palestinian Territory on the periphery of Jerusalem. Palestinians require access to a fair planning and zoning regime, so as not to resort to the building of unauthorized structures that lead to unjustified demolitions by Israeli authorities, which often affect the most vulnerable people. Demolitions and forcible transfers contravene international humanitarian and human rights law.

25. As at April 2016, 692 Palestinians were being held by Israeli authorities under administrative detention, compared with 370 at the beginning of the reporting period. For the first time since 2011, in October 2015, Israel resumed its use of administrative detention against Palestinian minor children. Israel is currently holding over 400 Palestinian children on security grounds. This figure, the highest since January 2008 when the Israeli Prison Service began releasing data,

has more than doubled since the outbreak of violence in October 2015. I am troubled by the high participation of Palestinian young people and children in the recent wave of violence, however, any response by Israeli security forces must adhere to international legal standards. I am especially concerned about the reports of detainees on a hunger strike. I reiterate my call to end the practice of administrative detention and to either charge all detainees or immediately release them.

26. I am also concerned by the continued punitive demolitions of homes belonging to families of Palestinian perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis. Punitive demolitions are a form of collective punishment, which is prohibited under international law. They are unproven as a deterrent, and they fuel tensions by exacerbating feelings of injustice and hatred.

27. Palestinians continued to advance their State-building programme, albeit limited to the territory under the Palestinian Authority's control, which excludes Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Notwithstanding strong international consensus that the Palestinian Authority was capable of running a State, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians remains concerned about its fiscal and economic viability. With a deficit of \$480 million in June, the World Bank projects that the Palestine Authority's total deficit for 2016 will reach \$1.327 billion or 9.8 per cent of gross domestic product. In its meeting on 19 April 2016, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee committed to developing a two-year strategy to address the Palestinian Authority's fiscal and long-term economic sustainability.

28. On 21 June, the Government of the State of Palestine called for municipal elections to be held 8 October. On 15 July,

Hamas announced its participation and asked for guarantees that the results would be recognized and that elected councils in Gaza and West Bank would be entitled to budget allocations and projects by the donor community.

29. I strongly encourage Israel to continue implementing measures that would facilitate sustainable growth and job creation for the Palestinian economy. The Quartet has consistently called upon Israel to implement positive and significant policy shifts, in particular in Area C, consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements. Progress in the areas of housing, water, energy, communications, agriculture and natural resources can be made while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs.

30. In Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains dire. Approximately 66,000 people remain internally displaced in transitional shelters. A total of 47 per cent of Palestinian households in the Gaza Strip are food insecure, and ongoing water deficiencies result in 40 per cent of the population receiving access to the water supply for only 5 to 8 hours every three to four days. In addition, electricity is unavailable for 16 to 18 hours each day. Palestinian access to depart and enter Gaza remains insufficient, which especially affects access to medical treatment. These conditions exacerbate the record high unemployment rates and chronic aid dependency.

31. Persistent security and governance challenges and funding shortages notwithstanding, the reconstruction process has continued. More than 90 per cent of damaged schools and hospitals have been repaired, while repairs have either been completed or are under way on about half of all partially damaged homes. Notwithstanding those improvements, the reconstruction of homes that were completely destroyed during the 2014

hostilities remains slow. I strongly encourage all Member States to fulfil their commitments to support the reconstruction and development of Gaza. I welcome and encourage the continuation of Israel's constructive cooperation with the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#). I reiterate that the Mechanism was designed as a temporary measure and that the ultimate objective of the United Nations in Gaza continues to be the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and in a manner that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns.

32. Repairing damage from the most recent hostilities, however, will not fix the underlying chronic problems of Gaza. The Palestinian Government has set out an ambitious \$3.8 billion plan for repairing damage from the 2014 conflict and getting recovery under way in Gaza. To implement the humanitarian response plan for 2016, which aims at addressing the humanitarian needs of 1.6 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, it has requested \$571 million. The appeal represents a 19 per cent reduction from 2015, but remains elevated owing largely to Gaza's significant humanitarian needs. I strongly encourage all Member States that have not done so to fulfil their commitments without delay. I remain concerned that limited crossing capacity and a range of other restrictions, along with a lack of Palestinian unity, mean that significant improvement in Gaza's humanitarian situation and overall economy remains unlikely.

33. If the underlying causes of previous conflicts are not addressed, conditions in Gaza will only worsen with the risk of further violence and radicalization. The security implications of the persistent pressures continue to be felt. As at 22 August, Palestinian militants in Gaza fired a total of 92 rockets at Israel, 27 of which impacted in Israel, none of

which caused injuries during the reporting period. The Israel Defense Force reportedly retaliated with a total of 56 air strikes in Gaza, causing five deaths and nine injuries. I call upon all Palestinian factions on the ground not to engage in activities that risk destabilizing the situation and undermining the reconstruction process.

34. I welcomed the decision of Egypt to open the Rafah crossing on four occasions, from 14 to 16 February, 11 to 12 May, 1 to 6 June and 29 June to 2 July. I encourage Egypt to explore ways to facilitate more frequent and predictable openings of the crossing, in particular for humanitarian purposes, while respecting Egypt's legitimate and pressing security concerns in the Sinai.

35. I remain worried about the state of human rights and freedoms in Gaza. Of particular concern are the reports of arbitrary detention and ill treatment in detention centres in Gaza. In May, Hamas announced plans to implement a number of death sentences and carried out three executions of Palestinians. Such actions were condemned by my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who called for a moratorium on the death penalty. I call upon the de facto authorities in Gaza to refrain from carrying out further executions. I also urge the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its responsibilities with full respect for international human rights laws.

36. During my recent visit to Israel and the State of Palestine on 27 and 28 June, I also travelled to Gaza, where I noted the resilience of the Gazan people under enormously difficult conditions and emphasised that, until Gaza and the West Bank are united under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian government, based on the rule of law and the principles of the Palestine Liberation Organization,

Gaza's prospects for full recovery will be limited.

37. The Palestinian Government of National Consensus must be empowered and enabled to assume its rightful responsibilities in Gaza, including in particular at the crossings with Israel and Egypt. I strongly urge Palestinian factions to advance genuine Palestinian unity on the basis of democracy and the principles of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Quartet. Genuine unity will also improve the Government's ability to meet the pressing economic problems, which are adding to Palestinians' frustration and anger. I welcome the resumption of unity talks held in Qatar and urge all sides to continue discussions and implement previous agreements. I strongly encourage the factions not to squander this important opportunity to reach a consensus that can enable the advancement of long-term Palestinian national goals, as well as near-term fiscal and development goals, for the Palestinian people. The United Nations stands ready to support all efforts in this direction.

38. As noted in my previous report, I remain seriously concerned by the lack of political progress and the high risk of further violence and radicalization. The international community must come together in cooperation with the parties on the ground and in the region to create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations. Israelis and Palestinians must face the stark realities that continue to drive the violence and hold hostage the two-State solution. The report of the Quartet has made clear that Israel's settlement enterprise continues to be an impediment to peace. Furthermore, the issue of incitement runs to the heart of the current climate of tension and fear. I am particularly concerned that some

Palestinian factions continue to glorify violence and terror and that the Palestinian Authority has consistently refrained from condemning specific terror attacks against Israelis. By the same token, Israel should understand that heavy-handed responses play into the hands of extremists, undermine moderate voices and further deepen the rift between the two sides. It remains clear that security measures alone will not contain the forces that perpetuate violence. Both sides must actively take steps that will demonstrate their commitment to, and create the conditions for, an eventual return to negotiations to achieve a viable Palestinian State and ensure Israel's long-term security.

39. I would like to express my deep appreciation to my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his outstanding service during the first year of his tenure. I am also grateful to the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Pierre Krähenbühl, and the remarkable work on behalf of Palestine refugees carried out by the staff of the Agency. I pay tribute, too, to all United Nations staff who work under difficult, and at times dangerous, circumstances in the service of the Organization.

40. Until the last day of my tenure, I will continue to ensure that the United Nations works towards the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel, within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement consistent with Security Council resolutions [242](#) (1967), [338](#) (1973), [1397](#) (2002), [1515](#) (2003) and [1860](#) (2009) and in accordance with the road map, the [Arab Peace Initiative](#) and the principle of land for peace.

V. UN DEPUTY SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE UPCOMING LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN PALESTINE

The following [statement](#) was issued on 24 August 2016 by the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Piper after his meeting with the Chairman of the Central Elections Commission (CEC), Dr. Hanna Nasir which focussed on the upcoming local council elections scheduled to take place on 8 October 2016:

“I am encouraged by the efforts of the CEC and the dedication of its staff in preparing for this important election which is to be carried out across the State of Palestine. It will be the first concurrent poll in the occupied West Bank and Gaza since 2006.

I welcome last month’s signing of the electoral code of conduct by the various Palestinian political parties and encourage all concerned to adhere to it. Conducting the local elections in line with established international standards can contribute to advancing Palestinian reconciliation based

on PLO principles. This would be vital for establishing a democratic, unified Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution. However, the lack of party unity or any attempt to influence the outcome of the elections, including through intimidation, threats, violence or coercion during the election campaign, risks widening divisions and undermining the Palestinian national cause.

I urge all parties to refrain from actions that could undermine the integrity of the process.”

VI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 29 August 2016, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Excerpts from the briefing are reproduced below ([S/PV.7762](#)):

With no prospect in sight for resuming negotiations, developments on the ground in Israel and Palestine continue to undermine an already precarious situation. Illegal settlement construction advances, Gaza remains beyond the control of the legitimate Palestinian Authority and the political leadership on both sides continues to shy away from the steps that are necessary for peace. That is the reality that continues to erode trust in the prospect for a two-State solution, the constituency for which is dwindling both in Israel and Palestine.

Although the past month has been relatively calm in terms of the frequency and intensity of violence in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, a number of security-related incidents continued to cause concern. First, there

was the apparent extrajudicial execution by members of the Palestinian security forces in Nablus on 23 August of a man, while in custody. He was suspected of orchestrating the killing of two security personnel earlier in the week. I welcome the announcement by Prime Minister Hamdallah of an investigation and call for a thorough, independent and transparent process, in line with international standards, in order to bring to justice the perpetrators of that crime.

On 21 August, militants in Gaza fired two rockets, one of which landed in a residential area of Sderot, causing no injuries. Israel responded by directing some 60 missiles and shells at 30 suspected military installations in Gaza. Once again, I reiterate that such rocket attacks and the response they elicit risk lives of both

Palestinians and Israelis and do not serve the cause of peace.

On 26 August, a Palestinian man, who was reportedly under psychiatric care, was killed by members of the Israeli security forces. A preliminary investigation established that he was unarmed and did not pose a threat. I call upon Israel to ensure accountability and take all the necessary measures protect against the unjustified use of force.

It is against such a backdrop that preparations are advancing for the 8 October Palestinian local council elections. In a positive development, on 25 July, political parties signed an electoral code of conduct, to which all parties and candidates must adhere. The elections are expected to be the first simultaneous polls in the West Bank and Gaza since 2006.

Conducting the local elections in line with established international standards can contribute to advancing Palestinian reconciliation. The lack of unity, however, or any attempt to influence the outcome of the elections, including through intimidation, threats, violence or coercion, risks widening divisions and undermining the Palestinian national cause. In that respect, the recent decision by Fatah to bring the party together — a decision welcomed by Jordan, Egypt and the region — is an important step towards laying the groundwork for national reconciliation and unity.

Turning briefly to Gaza, three days ago we marked the two-year anniversary of the ceasefire to the last Gaza conflict. While progress has been made on rebuilding from the physical damage, sadly we are miles away from repairing the physical and psychological damage of the conflict. While Gaza remains locked away from the rest of the world, in the grip of militants and dependent upon aid and humanitarian assistance, the status quo will prevail. We need a radical overhaul of how we deal with the problems of Gaza.

Until the closures are lifted, the militant build-up has ceased and Gaza is back under the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities, international funding and an uninterrupted flow of aid are a lifeline to over 1 million Palestinians in the Strip, who are struggling to survive within a dire humanitarian situation. In that context, I commend the Government of Palestine for enabling a much-needed humanitarian payment to over 20,000 unpaid civilian employees in Gaza, made possible by the generous donation from the State of Qatar.

Separately, however, I am very concerned about the recent Israeli indictments of two aid workers accused of diverting funds and/or material to Hamas. Those are very serious and deeply troubling accusations, which must be investigated thoroughly and quickly and proved in a court of law. I welcome the commitment of the United Nations Development Programme and World Vision International to uphold the highest standards of accountability. It is important that the international community continue to enforce its policy of zero-tolerance for any wrongdoing and assures partners that robust measures are in place to ensure that aid goes to those for whom it is intended.

It has been nearly two months since the Middle East Quartet [outlined](#) clearly the threats to the two-State solution and offered practical recommendations to enable an eventual return to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation that began in 1967. Its recommendations, however, continue to be ignored, including by way of a surge in Israeli settlement-related announcements and continuing demolitions. Let me focus briefly on the expanding Israeli footprint in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which Russia, the European Union, the United States and the Secretary-General — all part of the Quartet — have clearly condemned.

We heard that settlement construction was not an impediment to a two-State solution — that “a few houses” were not a problem for peace. Let me ask in return: How will advancing the construction of over 1,700 housing units bring the parties closer to negotiated peace, uphold the two-State solution, create hope for the Palestinian people or bring security to Israelis? Since 1 July, Israel has advanced plans for over 1,000 housing units in occupied East Jerusalem — in Pisgat Ze’ev, Ramot, Har Homa and Gilo — as well as 735 units in Ma’ale Adumim and other locations in the West Bank. It has published tenders, some new, for 323 units in East Jerusalem settlements and reissued tenders for 42 units in Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, for which it also allocated over \$13 million of new funding.

It is undertaking a new land survey to identify potential “State land” in the sensitive E-2 area. That step could enable the establishment of a new settlement on the outskirts of Bethlehem, further restricting that city’s development and contributing to the dismemberment of the West Bank. It is also reportedly examining plans for new housing units for 100 Israelis on a portion of a military compound in Hebron that it has allocated for that purpose.

Israel advanced the so-called retroactive “legalization” of the Horesh Yaron and Rechelim outposts and put forward a potentially precedent-setting proposal to relocate the illegal outpost of Amona — which is slated by Israel’s High Court of Justice for dismantling by the end of the year — onto nearby “absentee land”.

All of those plans would essentially create new illegal settlements, and I call on Israel to cease and reverse those decisions. Let me be clear: no legal acrobatics can change the fact that all outposts — whether “legalized” under Israeli law or not, whether located on State land, absentee land or private land — just like all settlements in Area C and East Jerusalem,

remain illegal under international law. It is difficult to read in those actions a genuine intention to work towards a viable two-State solution. This appears to reinforce a policy, carried out over decades, that has enabled over half a million Israelis to settle in territory that was occupied militarily in 1967.

The Quartet [highlighted](#) that Palestinians living in Area C and East Jerusalem were also disproportionately denied Israeli building permits. The past two months have seen an increase in the enforcement of non-punitive demolition orders against Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem, with 43 structures demolished, affecting more than 340 people. According to our colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in Area C in August alone, over 91 structures across 26 communities were demolished for the lack of Israeli building permits, displacing 125 people and affecting the livelihoods of over 2,100.

The Bedouins in Area C are particularly vulnerable. Some communities, such as the herders in Susiya and those in the controversial E-1 area around East Jerusalem, are particularly at risk, especially as settlement expansion plans move forward. Repeated rounds of demolitions of homes or livelihoods and restrictions on basic services are part of an environment that pressures those communities to move. Susiya, for example, is built on private Palestinian land in the southern West Bank. It is sandwiched between a settlement and an outpost. For years, planning schemes submitted by the residents to the Israeli authorities have been repeatedly rejected, while the neighbouring settlement has been granted a generous planning scheme, and the nearby illegal outpost is connected to water and electricity networks. The demolition of that community would set a dangerous precedent for displacement and fuel the perception that Israel aims at a de facto annexation of Area C.

I note a new plan for the occupied West Bank, announced recently, promoting differential treatment to areas of the occupied West Bank from which perpetrators or suspected perpetrators of attacks against Israelis originate. While measures that generate economic opportunities for some Palestinians are helpful, they cannot come at the cost of what may amount to collective punishment for others, or undermine the legitimate Palestinian institutions and aspirations for ending the occupation.

Turning briefly to the Golan, the situation remains volatile and continues to undermine the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Fighting between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the areas of separation and limitation continue, with several incidents across the ceasefire line reported.

I take this opportunity to also draw attention to a nearly \$100 million shortfall in the core budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That funding gap affects UNRWA's key services for vulnerable Palestine refugees throughout the region and compounds

regional instability. It must be addressed with the utmost urgency.

In conclusion, let me say that, more than 37 years ago, the Security Council determined that Israeli settlements in occupied territory had no legal validity and were an obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That determination was true in 1979, and it is equally true, and even more urgent a concern, today. For years, we have been managing this conflict while the occupation has continued, Palestinians have been dispossessed and a one-State reality has been establishing itself on the ground. It is time for all of us — the leaders on both sides, with support from the region and the international community — to end the conflict on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and in a manner that meets the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples. Both sides should work to reverse the negative trajectory, to build trust and to restore hope that a negotiated two-State solution is not just a political slogan, but a reality that can be achieved through negotiations within our lifetime.

VII. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL SUBMITS REPORT ON ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

On 30 August 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon submitted his report on “Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.” The following are the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report ([A/71/364](#)):

IV. Conclusions

70. Serious challenges persist to ensuring accountability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law against Palestinians. Despite efforts to strengthen the system of accountability, critical key steps, notably including those recommended by Israeli commissions, remain unimplemented,

partially implemented or are not followed in practice.

71. In order for meaningful change to happen, reforms are necessary. Without them, the failure to deliver accountability will continue to create a more permissive environment for Israeli security forces to commit human rights violations. Accountability for violations committed by all parties is a key factor in breaking the

cycle of violence and moving towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

V. Recommendations

72. The following recommendations should be read in conjunction with the numerous recommendations contained in previous reports of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

(a) Israel should take all measures to ensure full respect for its obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and ensure accountability for all violations;

(b) Israeli authorities should take all measures necessary to prevent incidents of excessive use of force during law enforcement operations. In cases in which force is used, including in the access-restricted areas near the Gaza fence, there should be compliance with international human rights law and standards. The authorities should ensure that independent reviews are conducted promptly and that any necessary revisions to rules of engagement, open-fire regulations and arrest procedures are made in order to ensure their compliance with international law;

(c) The use of force in the context of protests, clashes and demonstrations must be strictly consistent with international law. Regulations and practices with respect to the use of rubber-coated metal bullets and black sponge bullets should be reviewed to ensure that those weapons are only permitted to stop individuals engaged in violence, and not as a general tool to disperse a crowd. The use of firearms should only be permitted where there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury;

(d) Israel should ensure that medical assistance is promptly provided to persons wounded by security forces, without obstruction or discrimination. To that end, Israeli security forces should issue clear instructions to the effect that the wounded must receive immediate attention, without discrimination, and that medical personnel, including Palestinian ambulance crews, are not to be obstructed in performing their duties;

(e) Prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial criminal investigations should be conducted into all instances in which firearms have been used by law enforcement officials, in particular where such force has resulted in death or injury, and the outcome of the process should be made public. Those responsible for violations should be held accountable and prosecuted in fair trials, with charges and sentences commensurate with the gravity of the offences. As an initial step to reforming the investigative system, the recommendations of the Turkel Commission and Ciechanover Commission should be fully implemented;

(f) Israel should adopt legislation on international crimes, such as torture and war crimes, and establish independent mechanisms to review government and military policies and to ensure command responsibility;

(g) The blockade of Gaza should be lifted and all practices that amount to collective punishment, including restrictions on freedom of movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, punitive demolitions of homes, punitive residency revocations, cutting of benefits, punitive closures of towns and delays in returning bodies for burial, should be ended;

(h) Israel should end the practice of administrative detention and charge or release any detainees currently being held in administrative detention;

(i) All children should be treated with due consideration to their age, in accordance with international law, and should be detained only as a last resort;

(j) The authorities and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza should

ensure respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and should ensure accountability for all violations.”

VIII. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL DELIVERS VIDEO MESSAGE TO 2016 UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SEMINAR ON PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

From 31 August, to 2 September 2016, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations, in cooperation with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, organized the United Nations International Media Seminar on “Peace in the Middle East” in Pretoria. The following is the [video message](#) of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

I am pleased to greet the 2016 United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. I thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for hosting, and the Embassy of Sweden for its support.

For a quarter-century, these seminars have promoted dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. They have brought journalists and experts together to examine how local and international media can constructively and fairly cover the Middle East. They have stressed the need to avoid fanning the flames of hatred and violence, and to instead help build bridges of understanding and respect.

The United Nations counts on the media to explain to both sides, and to the world at large, that durable peace in the Middle East will only be achieved through a negotiated, just and comprehensive two-State solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living side-by-side in peace and security.

I have made this point repeatedly, including during my most recent visit to the region in June. The lives and aspirations of millions of people are at stake.

I wish you a successful seminar.

Thank you.