



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

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

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System  
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:  
<http://unispal.un.org>*

## I. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL APPOINTS NEW CHAIR OF THE GAZA INQUIRY COMMISSION

*Following the resignation of Professor William Schabas on 3 February 2015 as Chair of and member of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Ruecker of Germany, appointed current Commission member Mary McGowan as new Commission Chair. The following are the text of the two related press statements issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:*

The President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Ruecker (Germany), received a letter from Professor William Schabas last night in which Professor Schabas indicates that he is resigning as chair and member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Gaza conflict with immediate effect.

This letter follows one sent to the Council President on Friday, 30 January, by the Permanent Mission of Israel in which they ask for Professor Schabas' dismissal from the Commission of Inquiry due to what they refer to as a conflict of interest.

The President has accepted the resignation of Professor Schabas and thanks him for his work over the past six months as Chair of the Commission. The President respects the decision of Professor Schabas and appreciates that in this way even the appearance of a conflict of interest is avoided, thus preserving the integrity of the process.

The Human Rights Council President notes the decision taken by the Council requesting the Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and he also notes that the Commission is now in the final phase of collecting evidence from as many victims and witnesses as possible from both sides.

The report of the Commission of Inquiry is scheduled to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its upcoming session on 23 March.

The President is currently in discussions with the remaining two members of the Commission of Inquiry to discuss the appointment of the new Chairperson.

Ambassador Ruecker underlines the need to remain focused on the substantive work of the Commission in the interest of the victims and their families on both sides.

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Following today's announcement on the resignation of Professor William Schabas as Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict, the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Joachim Ruecker (Germany), has decided to appoint current Commission member Mary McGowan Davis to replace Professor Schabas as Commission Chair.

The Commission, now comprised of Mary McGowan Davis and Doudou Diène, both of whom were appointed in August last year, continues its important work and is scheduled to present its findings to the Human Rights Council on 23 March as mandated.

## **II. SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS NEW SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

*On 5 February 2015, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of the new United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The following is the related press release (SG/A/1543-BIO/4689):*

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of Nickolay Mladenov of Bulgaria as his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. In this capacity, Mr. Mladenov will be the Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Quartet.

Mr. Mladenov succeeds Robert Serry of the Netherlands to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his dedicated service and excellent leadership of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO).

Mr. Mladenov brings with him extensive experience in public service and international affairs. He is currently Special

Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). He served as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria from 2010 to 2013 and Minister of Defence of Bulgaria from 2009 to 2010. Previously, he was a Member of the European Parliament from 2007 to 2009 and a Member of the Parliament of Bulgaria from 2001 to 2005. Mr. Mladenov held several positions in the intergovernmental and nongovernmental sectors, including at the World Bank and the European Institute.

Mr. Mladenov earned a Master of Arts in war studies at King's College London, in the United Kingdom, and both a master's and a bachelor's degree in international relations at the University of National and World Economy of Sofia, in Bulgaria.

## **III. UN AND THE ARAB LEAGUE APPEAL TO GAZA DONORS TO HONOUR THEIR FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS**

*On 6 February 2015, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following joint statement with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil Elaraby, on the situation in Gaza (SG/2213-PAL/2185):*

The Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States express their deep concern over the situation in Gaza. They urgently appeal to donors to honour and disburse as soon as possible their financial commitments made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference. This support should also include funding for United Nations agencies that are carrying out vital operations in Gaza, in order to

prevent a further deterioration in the already dire humanitarian situation.

The pace of reconstruction in Gaza remains slow. It is crucial now to expand the scope of reconstruction efforts thus far to bring hope to the people of Gaza and ensure stability, based on international responsibility in reconstruction and lifting the siege.

Both Secretaries-General note the progress made so far under the temporary Gaza reconstruction mechanism, which has to date enabled access to construction material for some 55,000 Gazan

homeowners in support of shelter repairs. The operations of the mechanism are ready to be scaled up to facilitate the swift implementation of major large-scale projects.

#### **IV. QUARTET ISSUES STATEMENT AFTER MEETING IN MUNICH**

*The Quartet issued the following statement after its meeting in Munich on 8 February 2015 (SG/2214):*

Representatives of the Quartet — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry, European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson (representing UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon) — met in Munich on 8 February.

Recalling its previous statements, the Quartet discussed the situation in the region. The Quartet underlined the importance of the parties resuming negotiations as soon as possible, with a view to reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid Principles including land for peace and the agreements previously reached between the parties. A sustainable peace requires the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, and those of Israelis for security to be fulfilled through negotiations based on the two-State solution.

To that end, the Quartet recalled the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative — with its vision for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict — and the vital role of Arab partners. The Quartet will remain actively engaged in preparing for a resumption of the peace process in the coming period, including regular and direct outreach to Arab States.

Pending the resumption of negotiations, the Quartet called on both parties to refrain from actions that undermine trust or prejudge final status issues.

The Quartet underscored the importance of ensuring that the acute fiscal challenges faced by the Palestinians are addressed and of supporting Palestinian institution-building efforts.

The Quartet is deeply concerned over the difficult situation in Gaza where the pace of reconstruction needs to be accelerated to address the basic needs of the Palestinian population and to ensure stability. The Quartet Principals stressed that donor funding is critical. They expressed support for the recent joint letter by Egypt and Norway, as well as the joint statement by the Secretary-Generals of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, urging donors to disburse as soon as possible their financial commitments made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference, including the funding of United Nations agencies carrying out vital operations in Gaza for both the refugee and non-refugee populations.

The Quartet Principals expressed their warm appreciation for the tireless work of outgoing United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry.

## V. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OPENS ITS 2015 SESSION

*On 10 February 2015, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a meeting at UN Headquarters in New York opening its 2015 session and adopting its programme of work for the year (A/AC.183/2015/1). United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson made the following remarks at the meeting on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (DSG/SM/842-GA/PAL/1325):*

I have the honour to deliver the following message to the Committee from the Secretary-General. As the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People marks its fortieth year, I commend this body for its important and resolute work.

The General Assembly designated 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The aim was to catalyse global action on the Question of Palestine in the then promising context of direct peace negotiations brokered by the United States. Instead, the year was a grim one for Palestinians and Israelis, and all those who seek peace. Talks broke down and violence escalated. Last summer, hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza claimed the lives of nearly 2,200 Palestinians and 72 Israelis. Today, Gaza remains a desolate place under blockade and with much human suffering. I urge donors to fulfil pledges made at last October's Cairo Conference for the reconstruction of Gaza.

In 2014, violence also engulfed the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. The levels of incitement and hostility in and around Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount rose to alarming levels, threatening to inflame religious tensions in the region and beyond.

I regret that the parties have since taken unilateral steps that have deepened mutual distrust and distanced them from a prospect of negotiated settlement. I urge both parties to refrain from any action that could further exacerbate the situation and to demonstrate the necessary leadership for reaching and

implementing the difficult decisions that lie ahead.

Together with the Israelis and the Palestinians, the international community holds the responsibility for what has been a collective failure to advance a political solution. The United Nations system, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, this and other concerned Committees, must work to revive negotiations for a two-State solution. At a time when the entire region is facing the threat of terrorism and violent extremism, resolving this conflict is clearly a serious matter for international peace and security.

Member States and regional groups, including the League of Arab States, have intensified the search for a way out of the impasse. With the Quartet and other stakeholders engaged, we may have a better chance in 2015 to address issues that seem intractable. All good forces must now be mobilized.

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of our Organization, I call on this Committee to exert all efforts to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to help achieve a just and durable peace between Israel and Palestine, resolving the conflict by ending nearly half a century of occupation and establishing a sovereign and independent State of Palestine — living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

## **VI. HEAD OF WHO OFFICE AND UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ASSESS THE GAZA HEALTH SYSTEM**

*On 10 February 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued the following press release on the visit of the head of the WHO office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the Gaza Strip to assess the challenges facing the health system there:*

Today the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Mr James W. Rawley, and the head of the WHO office in oPt, Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, visited the Gaza Strip to see the critical challenges currently facing the health system.

The delegation visited Al Qubba Primary Health Center in East Gaza, a severely damaged clinic which can no longer provide health services, and Al Rahma clinic which is accommodating its own clients as well as those of Al Qubba. The directors of both clinics briefed the visitors.

The delegation then visited Al-Shifa hospital where they visited the medical departments and were briefed by officials of the Ministry of Health on the difficulties of delivering basic services in Gaza, and especially during the summer 2014 crisis. Representatives from UNFPA, UNRWA, Medical Aid for Palestine, Palestinian Medical Relief Society and UNICEF described the challenges faced by UN agencies, local and international NGOs in the health sphere.

At a press conference later, Mr Rawley highlighted the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator in supporting the health sector, and the role of the WHO office in closely monitoring chronic and emerging issues critical to the provision of adequate health services in Gaza.

### **Gaza's health crisis**

“The blockade is a structural problem for the Palestinian health sector and a barrier to free access, control over resources and planning, and economic and educational opportunities, required for a well-functioning health system,” was a key WHO message.

Patients' access to Egypt has been reduced by 85% since 2011. While over 2,000 patients from Gaza were identified to be in need for specialized medical referral services in hospitals in Egypt in 2014, less than 600 of those patients were able to access their care due to the closure of the Rafah border.

18 000 patients seek access to referral services through Erez crossing, mostly to Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, but also to Israeli hospitals and 18% experience problems in access.

Chronic shortages in essential medicines have been averaging 30% over the past 5 years, and up to 50% in medical disposables. During the summer 2014 attacks on Gaza, foreign drug donations bridged gaps temporarily, but for 2015 the Ministry of Health in Gaza to date has only 6% of its required budget for medicines.

The damage to the power infrastructure and the long-term fragility of power supply and grids is a constant concern for the 22 public and non-profit hospitals in Gaza who provide life-saving care. Back-up systems

and other coping mechanisms are insufficient alternatives to a reliable power supply.

The total cost of required investment in health infrastructure for the relief, early recovery and reconstruction phases in the health sector following the Gaza crisis is estimated to be USD 218 million. Only a fraction of these needed funds have been raised so far.

The health system is also negatively affected by internal problems that are a result of the political-financial situation in the West Bank and Gaza, seen most urgently

in the current health workers salary crisis. 50% of the Ministry health workforce in Gaza began a partial strike in late January to demand full payment of their salaries. Contracted hospital services for cleaning and food catering have also threatened imminent strike due to long-standing non payments. The crisis has already caused disruption in health services, curtailing elective surgeries, shortening work hours of clinics and leading to overcrowding of patients seeking care. An urgent solution is required to maintain continuity of health services, while a longer term process is developed to ensure a sustainable solution for the health workforce.

## **VII. USG FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 18 February 2015, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are excerpts from the briefing (S/PV.7386):*

I brief the Council today after what has been another tumultuous and deadly month in the Middle East. Steadily increasing tensions and swelling violence have continued to affect the region. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians continues to threaten further escalation. As we warned the Council last month, if this occurs it may have highly damaging and potentially irreversible consequences for both parties and for the two-State solution.

The Palestinians are facing acute fiscal challenges that must be urgently addressed. On 4 February, the Israeli Government announced that, for a second month, it would withhold the transfer of the tax revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority in retaliation for the Palestinian accession to the International Criminal Court. This brings the total withheld to over \$200 million. As a stopgap

measure, the Palestinian Authority has since borrowed funds from private banks to pay a portion of the salaries of its civil servants. This approach is neither sufficient nor sustainable.

As reported by the International Monetary Fund on 29 January, Palestinian economic activity contracted in 2014 for the first time since 2006. Paralysing the Palestinian Authority's ability to conduct essential Government business, including functions related to health services and law and order, is in no one's interest. Israel's action is a violation of its obligations under the Paris Protocol of the Oslo Accords, and we again call for an immediate reversal of this decision. The Secretary-General reiterates his call on both sides to refrain from taking unilateral steps or actions that may further aggravate the current divisions.



Against a backdrop of growing disillusionment with the prospects for a return to dialogue, the Middle East Quartet met at the principals level on 8 February in Munich to examine ways to reverse the current negative trend. The Quartet prioritized the urgent resumption of negotiations and a strengthening of its engagement to prepare for a revival of the peace process, including through regular and direct outreach to the Arab States. It also called for the acceleration of reconstruction in Gaza.

This engagement is an important and timely development and should be supported. But we must be clear that, absent concrete actions and a clear unity of purpose on the part of the international community, the Quartet will not be able to play an effective role. Even more imperative, however, is the need to obtain a firm commitment from Israelis and Palestinians alike to put aside their deeply entrenched mistrust and demonstrate the courage and leadership that is required at this time.

Turning to Gaza, the Secretary-General continues to be very concerned about the fragile security situation, the volatile political dynamics and the persistently slow pace of reconstruction. In a clear indication of mounting tensions on the ground and the corresponding risks to United Nations personnel and operations in Gaza, violent demonstrators forced their way into the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in Gaza on 28 January, in protest of the suspension by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) of its cash assistance programme, which supports repairs and provides rental subsidies to refugee families. While, fortunately, no one was injured in the incident, the Special Coordinator temporarily withdrew United

Nations monitors in light of this unacceptable incident until assurances were received that such attacks would not be repeated. Pending the much-needed full transfer of security responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, we continue to hold Hamas fully responsible for the security and safety of all United Nations personnel and operations in Gaza.

The Secretary-General is also alarmed at the reported failed firing by Palestinian militants of rockets at Israel on 19 January and 16 February, as well as their renewed test firing at sea of some 37 rockets during the reporting period. Reportedly, militants also attempted to smuggle material that could be used to produce weapons. These are extremely dangerous developments. The Israel Defense Forces reportedly shot and injured two Palestinians who were approaching the Gaza border fence on 16 and 23 January, and another two Palestinians were injured on 21 January after the Israeli navy fired warning shots at their boats.

Meanwhile, the oft-repeated political challenges in Gaza endure and represent clear dangers for stability. They include the moribund effort to consolidate ceasefire arrangements and the absence of genuine intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including the outstanding issues of unpaid salaries to Gaza public sector employees and civil service reform.

Absent the full reopening of the crossing points within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009), the temporary Gaza reconstruction mechanism continues to provide a measure of hope that genuine progress can be achieved in Gaza. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the mechanism is now functioning and delivering concrete results. As of today, more than 75,000 individuals have been

cleared to receive construction material for shelter repairs and more than 47,000 have already procured construction material to date. The processing of approximately 50 construction projects through the Palestinian Authority is ongoing, including housing projects, water networks and schools. Of those, 18 projects have been approved to date.

Yet, despite the mechanism's continued expansion, four months after the Cairo conference donors have yet to fulfil the vast majority of their pledges. Frankly, that is unacceptable. It cannot continue if we hope to avoid another escalation in Gaza. In that respect, both the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Egypt through a joint letter, and the Quartet all made appeals to donors to honour their financial commitments to Gaza without further delay. UNRWA urgently needs \$100 million for its cash assistance programme. Support is also needed for United Nations agencies that are providing vital humanitarian assistance to the non-refugee population. On 12 February, the United Nations, in partnership with the Government of Palestine, launched the strategic response plan for 2015, which aims to address the humanitarian needs of 1.6 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The plan requests \$705 million, 75 per cent of which is for Gaza.

While acknowledging Egypt's legitimate security concerns, I also reiterate the Secretary-General's call for Egyptian authorities to reopen the Rafah crossing. The previously reported humanitarian concerns persist, with some 1,400 patients currently awaiting hospital care referral to Egypt and with over 15,000 people otherwise registered and unable to exit Gaza.

The Secretary-General is concerned about the continued clashes in the occupied West Bank during the reporting period. Israeli security forces conducted approximately 470 search-and-arrest operations, resulting in the arrests of some 535 Palestinians. Reportedly, one Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli security forces on 31 January, after throwing Molotov cocktails towards Israeli vehicles in the area.

Some 156 Palestinians were injured, including 31 children and 5 women. Palestinians injured four members of the Israeli security forces, including one during a demonstration. On 21 January, a Palestinian man stabbed 12 passengers on a commuter bus in Tel Aviv — three were seriously injured. Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers continued to take place on an almost daily basis, resulting in eight Palestinians injured, including four children, and nine Israeli settlers injured, including one child. The Secretary-General strongly condemns all those acts of violence.

The Israeli authorities continued to demolish Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A total of 62 structures, 33 of them residences, were demolished, leading to the displacement of approximately 88 Palestinians, including 49 children. I urge Israel to cease such demolitions and the displacement of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Area C, and to facilitate international assistance to vulnerable communities. Area C is fundamental to the contiguity of the West Bank and the viability of Palestine and its economy.

We are deeply disappointed by Israeli authorities' decision to issue on 30 January tenders for the construction of about 450 residential units in West Bank settlements, at a time when the situation is extremely

volatile. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly expressed, settlement activity is illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. It should be halted and reversed.

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In conclusion, we see the circumstances in Gaza as becoming increasingly worrisome as we approach the six-month mark since the end of last summer's conflict. The combination of the failure to rectify the persistent governance and security issues and the slow pace of reconstruction has created an increasingly toxic environment.

While the primary obligation evidently lies with the parties, a key component of reversing those negative trends is to implement the financial commitments made

by donors at the Cairo conference. A failure to deliver the necessary support is putting an almost unbearable strain on an already highly fractious environment.

Establishing a framework that could lead to comprehensive peace must once again become a priority. We hope that the international community, possibly through a reinvigorated Quartet, can help the parties avoid a downward slide and support a return to negotiations. The Secretary-General is determined that the United Nations will continue to play an active role in supporting those efforts. However, international efforts cannot succeed in isolation. Genuine and lasting peace can be reached only through the commitment of the parties to overcome their mistrust and make the difficult compromises necessary to achieve a resolution to this conflict.

### **VIII. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS FOR SAFE ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR PALESTINIAN CHILDREN**

*The Office of UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory James Rawley issued the following press release on his 26 February 2015 visit to the Old Cities of Jerusalem and Hebron to assess children's access to education:*

In today's visit to the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City and the Old City of Hebron, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, James W. Rawley, together with diplomats from seven countries, learned firsthand about children's difficulties in accessing safe and quality education, by speaking to affected students, teachers, parents, authorities, and relevant organizations.

Mr. Rawley and the diplomats visited schools affected by settler violence, military incursions or detention of students in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. In Hebron's Old City, the delegation walked through some of the 18 permanent

checkpoints which students have to cross daily, and where they are often subjected to bag or body searches, long waiting times, harassment or detention.

"Schools are inviolable safe spaces for children", Mr. Rawley said. "To safeguard the rights of children to quality education, reasonable measures are needed; for example, not stationing armed soldiers near the entrance to a school during opening and closing times."

Incidents involving schools almost tripled in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from 2013 to 2014, affecting nearly 25,000 Palestinian children in 2014.

They included military use of premises; military or other armed group activity; settler-related incidents; and demolition of schools.

Affected children grow up exposed to violence from an early age and many suffer from emotional and psychological distress. Over 77 per cent of students in Hebron showed symptoms of moderate to severe

post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a recent study.

“Every child has the right to protected access to education”, Mr. Rawley said. “Israeli authorities must ensure that this right is fulfilled, and that those responsible for attacks against defenceless children are brought to account,” he concluded.

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