



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
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<http://unispal.un.org>*

I. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS KILLING OF TWO ISRAELIS IN JERUSALEM

On 4 October 2015, the Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/17186):

The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms the attacks on 3 October in the Old City of Jerusalem, including the killing of two members of an Israeli family and injuries to Israelis and Palestinians in subsequent incidents in various neighbourhoods in Jerusalem.

Recalling the recent deadly attack on another Israeli family in the occupied West Bank, and in light of the wave of extremism and violence sweeping the region, the Secretary-General is deeply concerned that these latest incidents signal a dangerous slide towards escalation.

The Secretary-General is deeply troubled by statements from Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas, praising such heinous attacks. He urges all leaders to condemn violence and incitement, maintain calm and to do everything they can to avoid further escalation.

The Secretary-General firmly believes that a just and lasting solution to the conflict can be achieved only through pursuing a negotiated two-State solution. The United Nations stands ready to work with all parties to create the conditions on the ground, in the region and internationally to make meaningful negotiations possible.

II. SECRETARY-GENERAL SUBMITS REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES

On 5 October 2015, 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/70/406):

88. The Special Committee proposes the following recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly. It is recommended that the Assembly call upon the Government of Israel to:

(a) Provide the Special Committee with access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Gaza, which would enable the Committee to meet with victims and families of human rights violations, and with the government officials of Israel and Palestine;

(b) Implement all prior recommendations of the Special Committee, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of

human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, the 2009 Human Rights Council fact-finding mission on Gaza, and those contained in the report of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1;

(c) Comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council annulled the decision of Israel on the annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan, and end its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the occupied Syrian Golan;

(d) End the blockade of Gaza, which constitutes collective punishment of the people of Gaza, halt the use of lethal weapons in access-restricted areas, both on land and at sea, and respect the 20-nautical-mile-limit, as agreed under the Oslo Accords, for the fishermen of Gaza;

(e) Address, as a part of the right to reparation, the legal hurdles and obstructions Palestinians in Gaza face in securing compensation for violations of human rights and humanitarian law;

(f) Take appropriate steps to address the lack of accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law during the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip in 2009, 2012 and 2014;

(g) Halt and dismantle all construction and plans to expand settlements, and related programmes in the occupied territories, and take immediate steps to address all incidents of settler violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including, where applicable, through investigation, prosecution, sentencing and reparation;

(h) Immediately halt the forcible transfer or displacement of civilians and the destruction of Palestinian private property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and address the threat posed to the traditional livelihood of Bedouins, who are under constant intimidation of forcible displacement by the Israeli authorities;

(i) Put an end to the discriminatory zoning and planning process, which serves the policy of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem, and ensure that sufficient funds/budget are allocated for basic services, such as health, water and sanitation, for Palestinians in East Jerusalem;

(j) Immediately cease all interference in the delivery of humanitarian aid by the

international community to Palestinian communities;

(k) Address the Committee's concerns about the excessive use of force and the humiliating treatment of women, especially during night-time raids undertaken by Israeli security forces to arrest Palestinians;

(l) Promptly charge or release all suspects, whether Palestinian or Israeli, under administrative detention, held without charge or trial, often on the basis of secret evidence, for periods of up to six months, which are extendable indefinitely;

(m) Investigate and, where applicable, prosecute allegations of ill-treatment and torture of detainees, including regular beatings and electric shock, cease the use of solitary confinement and provide access to families and lawyers of detainees in line with international standards;

(n) Ensure that all children and their legal guardians are provided, on arrest, with a written statement in Arabic informing them of their full legal rights in custody, and that children are allowed to consult with a lawyer prior to questioning;

(o) Ensure that all children are accompanied by a family member throughout their questioning and that every interrogation is recorded audiovisually;

(p) Take immediate steps to ensure compliance with international standards for law enforcement and ensure accountability for the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(q) Remove restrictions, including the system of permits, checkpoints, the wall and other forms of closures, and allow Palestinians to access mosques and churches

in East Jerusalem and other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(r) Immediately cease all excavation works below or near the al-Aqsa compound, which may potentially cause harm to the al-Aqsa mosque;

(s) Reconsider all of the legislation passed or under consideration by the Knesset that contravenes international human rights standards, for example, the Absentees' Property Law, the Prevention of Damage by Hunger Strikers bill and the amendment to the Penal Code increasing the penalty for stone throwers;

(t) Inform Israeli and multinational corporations working in the occupied territories of their corporate social responsibilities to act with heightened due diligence and of the international legal ramifications of business activities with negative human rights impacts;

(u) Take appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for corporate abuse and/or exploitation of resources in the occupied territories through, inter alia, effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication.

89. The Special Committee also calls upon:

(a) The international community 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) The international community and the Palestinian Authority to accelerate efforts to translate declarations of political unity into

tangible measures on the ground, as that effort would encourage greater donor confidence;

(c) The international community to ensure continued and sufficient funding of UNRWA projects, in particular for the education of Palestinian children;

(d) The international community, while ensuring Israel's security concerns, to use the international community's influence to end the blockade of Gaza, which has a significant detrimental effect on Palestinians;

(e) Member States 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;

(f) Member States 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;

(g) The international community to give effect to its legal obligations, as contained in the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, on the wall;

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

III. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE SUBMITS ITS ANNUAL REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 6 October 2015, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People submitted its annual report to the General Assembly. The following are the conclusions and recommendations of the report (A/70/35):

84. The Committee remains convinced that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects in accordance with United Nations resolutions, an urgent end to the Israeli occupation, and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, remain central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and should be a top priority of the international community. As has consistently emerged during the international meetings organized by the Committee, any resolution of the conflict will require a comprehensive regional solution, conceivably with support from the reinvigorated Quartet, that includes greater engagement with key Arab States and the other States concerned. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a significant contribution to such a regional settlement. The Committee is supporting those efforts and will continue its enhanced cooperation with the League of Arab States and OIC.

85. In its continued support to revitalize the peace negotiations, the Committee aligns itself with the view that the previous paradigm of bilateral negotiations, which after more than two decades have not yielded any success, should be revised. There is a need to obtain a firm commitment from Israel with regard to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Serious efforts are needed between the parties to overcome their deeply entrenched mistrust, including confidence - building efforts with the support of the international community, and

to demonstrate the courage and leadership that is required at this time. If the two parties do continue to seek an outcome of two neighbouring States living in peace and security, but are unable themselves at this juncture to agree on a meaningful framework to resume negotiations, the international community must consider presenting such a framework, including parameters. In that regard, it is the primary responsibility of the Security Council, under the Charter of the United Nations, to play its role in defining a new peace architecture for resolving the conflict. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to give positive consideration to all proposals that endeavour to present a way out of the current impasse. The Committee intends to contribute to a healthy and necessary discussion of these issues via its programme of work.

86. The Committee notes that the reconstruction of Gaza has now commenced, one year after the devastating war. However, the pace of reconstruction remains inadequately slow and the humanitarian and security situation is fragile; clean water, sanitation and electricity are still scarce and the tens of thousands of Palestinians who were rendered homeless and destitute by the conflict remain so. Immediate steps are needed to solidify the ceasefire and to accelerate reconstruction efforts, focusing on the physical rebuilding and delivery of affordable energy and sufficient water and the amelioration of dire socioeconomic conditions. Continued donor funding has to be secured for the long term, including for UNRWA. There is need for continued

funding for the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Ultimately, in order to ensure respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, prevent deterioration beyond the breaking point and break the build-destroy-rebuild cycle, the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip must end and there must be a lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Palestinian reconciliation is also essential, and a Palestinian unity government has to take up governance and security functions in Gaza and exercise control over the crossings. The Committee reiterates its calls upon the United Nations members and observers to provide generous support to UNRWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other organizations working on the ground to alleviate the catastrophic conditions and to expedite the Gaza reconstruction efforts.

87. The Committee reiterates that violations of humanitarian and human rights law have to be investigated and that the perpetrators should be brought to justice. The primary responsibility for such investigations rests with the Member States but they could be conducted by relevant United Nations and other international bodies if necessary. The Committee welcomed the fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council and the report of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/29/52) as important steps towards achieving accountability for violations of humanitarian and human rights law. The findings and recommendations of the report should be vigorously followed up on by the relevant bodies and authorities with a view to ending impunity.

88. The Committee welcomes the accession by the State of Palestine to additional international conventions and treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and encourages its Government to take all steps towards full compliance with those instruments, to the extent allowed by the constraints imposed by the Israeli occupation. As became apparent during the legal round table organized by the Committee, the signature by the State of Palestine of additional international instruments can help to strengthen the rule of law and uphold human rights domestically, while making it possible to pursue justice and accountability for Palestinian victims through available international legal mechanisms. The Committee stands ready to further contribute to capacity-building in this area through its training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine.

89. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, particularly in respect of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It welcomes in that regard the appropriate stance of the European Union on the importation of products from settlements and encourages the European Union and other organizations and States to adopt and implement other such policies that guarantee adherence to international conventions in regard of illegal settlements in occupied areas, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. It welcomes further steps taken by Governments and private businesses to dissociate themselves from policies that directly or indirectly support settlements.

90. Through its mandated activities, the Committee will continue to generate heightened international awareness of the

question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and independence. In that connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in support of its mandate. It notes with satisfaction:

(a) the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the programme's objectives, as evidenced by the number of and participation in international meetings and conferences, and commemorations of the International Day and Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine; and (c) an increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the increased number of visitors to the Question of Palestine website and followers of social media sites maintained by the Division. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, carried out annually by the Division, has proved its usefulness, as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the funding of the programme in 2015 by the OPEC Fund for International Development and strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further expanded.

91. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2016, to be implemented by the Division, on amplifying international

support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, stressing the role and responsibility of the United Nations in that regard and in this year of the seventieth anniversary of the Organization. The Committee intends to work closely with other United Nations actors on the ground, such as the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern. The Committee will also continue to examine the legal aspects of the question of Palestine.

92. The Committee will continue to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to support and enhance the viability of the State of Palestine. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just solution to all permanent status issues, including the question of refugees, based on principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III). It will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and young people and their organizations.

93. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people. It will expand its efforts to engage with all the supporters of a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including in Israel. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine.

94. The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with

parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of a peaceful and just solution of the question of Palestine and uphold their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. It will continue its outreach to new audiences such as local governments, which also have an important role to play in promoting the rights of the Palestinian people and the responsibilities of Governments to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights laws and conventions.

95. The Committee will reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership. It will actively work to organize more thematic debates on the question of Palestine in various United Nations forums. Recognizing the growing importance of developing countries and regional and subregional organizations, it will make a special effort to step up engagement with those countries and organizations in its work.

96. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, in support of the Committee's communication strategy. The Division should pay special attention to continued development of the "Question of Palestine" portal, the preparation of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and their widest possible dissemination, including in the official languages of the United Nations, and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It should also continue to develop the UNISPAL document collection by reflecting current

issues and events, as well as by continuing to digitize and upload historical documents and to add user-friendly search features. The Division should continue to collaborate with the United Nations Libraries at Headquarters and in Geneva in the search for historic documents. It should explore opportunities to expand the breadth and scope of the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, paying special attention to the programme's gender balance, such as expanding the pool of potential participants to all offices and departments of the Government and optimizing the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. Continued voluntary contributions from member and observer States and international organizations in line with their capacity, such as from the OPEC Fund for International Development in 2015, are to be encouraged to put the programme on a solid financial footing.

97. The Division should continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

98. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

99. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States

to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General

Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS ON ISRAEL TO INVESTIGATE KILLING OF FOUR PALESTINIANS

On 6 October 2015, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/17188):

The Secretary-General is profoundly alarmed by the growing number of deadly incidents in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The last few days of clashes, which resulted in the death of four Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy, and hundreds injured, are yet another worrisome sign of violence potentially spiralling out of control. The Secretary-General condemns the killings and looks to the Government of Israel to conduct a prompt and transparent investigation into the incidents, including whether the use of force was proportional. He does not believe that the demolition of Palestinian houses or the construction of new Israeli settlements on

occupied Palestinian land will do anything other than inflame tensions still further.

The escalation of violent incidents underscores the need for urgent action by both sides. The Secretary-General welcomes the commitment by Palestinian and Israeli officials to work together to curb the violence, including through continued security cooperation.

The Secretary-General reiterates the United Nations readiness to work with all parties to create the conditions on the ground, in the region and internationally, for a political horizon including meaningful negotiations towards a two-State solution.

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

On 14 October 2015, 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 (A/70/421):

71. The following recommendations should be read in conjunction with the numerous recommendations contained in previous reports of the Secretary-General and of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with respect to the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, most of which remain relevant but unimplemented.

72. Recommendations to the Government of Israel:

(a) Fully lift the blockade of Gaza and end the collective punishment against the civilian population and ensure sustainable economic recovery and development. That must entail, at a minimum, allowing the free movement of Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and ensuring that any restrictions on freedom of movement and the transfer of goods from, into and within Gaza, are consistent with international law;

(b) Ensure that the use of force by the Israeli security forces, including in the access-restricted areas, and in situations other than hostilities, is in compliance with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, including by carrying out an independent review and any necessary revisions of rules of engagement or regulations on opening fire to ensure their consistency with international law;

(c) Carry out prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of unlawful killing or injury and ensure they are subject to public scrutiny; allow for meaningful victim participation in proceedings; and ensure that the results are made public and that those responsible for violations are brought to justice in fair trials. Victims must be provided with a prompt, adequate and effective remedy. As an initial step to reforming the investigative system, implement the recommendations contained in the second report of the Turkel Commission;

(d) Ensure full compliance with the prohibition of forcible transfer and annul any plans to relocate Bedouin and herder communities without their free and informed consent;

(e) Grant access to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory for, and cooperate with, international human rights

bodies and NGOs concerned with investigating alleged violations of international law by all duty bearers.

73. Recommendation to the Government of the State of Palestine:

Conduct prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of unlawful killing, injury or summary executions by security forces and any violations of international humanitarian law by Palestinian actors. Ensure that such investigations are subject to public scrutiny, allow for meaningful victim participation in proceedings and ensure that the results are made public and that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials. Victims must be provided with a prompt, adequate and effective remedy.

74. Recommendations to Palestinian armed groups in Gaza:

(a) Respect international humanitarian law, especially in relation to all rules on the conduct of hostilities, in particular, the principle of distinction, which includes a prohibition on indiscriminate attacks, and ensure accountability for violations;

(b) Declare publicly that acts amounting to violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law will not be tolerated. All armed groups must remove from active duty those among their members suspected of having committed such acts.

VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS ARSON ATTACK AGAINST JOSEPH'S TOMB IN NABLUS

On 16 October 2015, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/17238):

The Secretary-General condemns the arson attack by Palestinian protesters against Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, in the West Bank, today. He welcomes President Mahmoud Abbas' immediate condemnation of the attack and his announcement that a committee has been established to conduct a full investigation of this crime. The Secretary-General looks forward to a thorough investigation to quickly bring the perpetrators to justice.

This reprehensible act is yet another example of the escalating violence in the region threatening to further inflame sensitivities owing to the religious significance of Joseph's Tomb. The Secretary-General calls on all sides to respect the sanctity of all holy sites, refrain from any inflammatory actions or statements and reject the extremist elements that are pursuing a political agenda seeking to transform the current situation into a religious conflict.

VII. SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS EMERGENCY SESSION ON SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 16 October 2015, the Security Council held an emergency session on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following is the transcript of a briefing delivered by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Taye-Brook Zerihoun (S/PV.7536):

Today we witnessed yet another example of the escalating violence when a large group of Palestinians set fire to the compound containing the holy site of Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus. Fortunately, there were no reported injuries, but the site sustained major damage. As with the many deadly incidents over the past weeks, the Secretary-General strongly condemns this reprehensible act and calls on those responsible to be swiftly brought to justice. The United Nations welcomes President Abbas' condemnation of the arson attack and his announcement that a committee has been established to conduct a full investigation into the crime.

This incident represents a particularly troubling development in the light of its religious dimension. We call on all sides to respect the sanctity of all holy sites and

reject the extremist elements that are pursuing a political agenda and seeking to transform the current situation from a national into a religious struggle. If they are successful in those efforts, the consequences could be catastrophic for Palestinians and Israelis alike, with serious reverberations throughout the region.

This latest incident comes on the heels of a deadly week in the West Bank, Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. There were 11 reported attacks against Israelis and Israeli security forces, leaving 4 Israelis and 9 Palestinians dead and 16 Israelis and 4 Palestinians wounded. There were also three reported stabbings and ramming attacks on Israelis in Israel, leaving 10 Israelis injured and 3 Palestinian suspects wounded. In Gaza, a seventh Palestinian succumbed to his wounds on 10 October, after clashing

with the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) near the security barrier the previous day. On 11 October, and a Palestinian woman and her 4-year-old child died in Gaza after Israeli air strikes on Hamas sites caused a building to collapse. The air strikes were in response to rocket-fire on southern Israel the day before, 10 October.

Palestinian militants fired at least eight rockets towards Israel during the past week alone, with most having fallen short and landed within Gazan territory, and one having been intercepted by Iron Dome. Another rocket was test-fired at the sea, to which the Israeli Defence Forces responded with warning shots, injuring one Palestinian. As of yesterday, a total of 7 Israelis and 32 Palestinians, including those who allegedly conducted or attempted attacks, were killed. Some 124 Israelis, including Israeli security force personnel, and over 1,118 Palestinians have reportedly been injured since 1 October.

Since those latest attacks, Israel's Security Cabinet has passed a broad range of new security measures, which are already being implemented. The Israeli Defence Forces have already significantly bolstered their presence in Israeli city centres, while many Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem have been surrounded by security forces, with access roads having been blocked and checkpoints established. Following the deterioration that began on 1 October, the Israeli authorities have also reinstated a number of movement restrictions in the West Bank, in particular by restaffing 16 checkpoints that had previously been left unstaffed. Ad hoc checkpoints have been erected at over 100 West Bank sites for varying periods of time.

Additional measures are being introduced with the goal of deterring would-be terrorists from carrying out attacks. The

homes of those accused of carrying out terror attacks will be demolished within days of any attack, and their families — if residents of East Jerusalem and not Israeli citizens — will have their permanent residency status revoked. Already this month, two structures have been blown up and a third one partially sealed. However, those actions followed attacks that took place in 2014. A total of 30 Palestinians, including 20 children, were displaced as a result of those demolitions.

The United Nations has maintained a consistent position on those issues. Collective punishment, including house demolitions, is counterproductive and contravenes international law, and we have urged Israel to cease that damaging practice. What is clear is that the current crisis cannot be resolved through security measures alone. The persistence of the occupation and diminishing prospects for achieving Palestinian aspirations to statehood have transformed long-simmering Palestinian anger into outright rage. That stark reality has been compounded by the increasingly dire economic situation and circumstances, including the bleak prospects for youth employment. The continued and expanding settlement activities further diminish the hope and potential for creating a viable Palestinian State. Such loss of political perspective is the single-most damaging factor that contributes to the anger and frustration driving the violence that we are seeing today.

Against this backdrop, there are a number of factors that sparked the current crisis. Tensions at the holy sites in Jerusalem were the main instigators. Reckless statements made by Palestinian and Israeli extremist elements, reinforced by some mainstream voices as well, have insinuated that Israel is aiming to change the status quo at the holy sites. This fear has reverberated

widely across the Arab world. Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the historic status quo at the holy sites have been welcome, but perceptions will change only when concrete actions, based on the agreements between Israel and Jordan, follow those words.

A second factor feeding the escalation has been the apparent heavy-handed approach taken by Israeli security services. Wide dissemination of video footage of several incidents fuelled more attacks and has raised serious questions as to the appropriate level of force used by the IDF and police. The Secretary-General has called for a thorough investigation of all such cases. It is clear that such incidents serve only to exacerbate the situation, leading to a

vicious cycle of needless bloodshed. We appreciate Israeli efforts to reduce the lethality of response, particularly in Gaza after the indefensible killings of protesters behind the separation fence, and we encourage greater restraint whenever there is no imminent threat to life or of serious injury.

Finally, we have seen that the impact of social media and irresponsible rhetoric has played a dramatic role in the escalation. On this count, both sides have much to be blamed for, but we welcome the efforts of leaders in recent days to tone down their statements. We call on community, religious and political leaders on all sides to calm the language they use in this regard and to work together to de-escalate the situation.

VIII. UN RAPPOREUR ON PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CALLS ON ISRAEL TO ABIDE BY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON USE OF FORCE

The following are excerpts from the press release released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 16 October 2015:

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Makarim Wibisono, expressed grave concern and deep sadness at this month's intensification of violence across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza.

"Too many Palestinian and Israeli lives have been lost in the context of violent attacks and clashes," Mr. Wibisono said, noting also the hundreds of injured. "In the face of growing violence, I urge Israel to exercise restraint and to recognise that all, including Palestinians, have equal right to respect for their human rights and their dignity."

The number of reported Palestinian deaths, including children, is steadily rising.

There are concerns of excessive use of force against Palestinians by Israeli security forces in the context of clashes, and cases of suspected Palestinian assailants shot and killed rather than arrested following attacks on Israelis, have been reported.

"In order to calm the situation and avoid further casualties, it is critical that authorities deal with protests and any crime, in accordance with international law," the human rights expert underscored.

"In particular, Israeli security forces must abide by international standards on use of force. Everyone's life deserves to be protected and nobody's security is enhanced by failing to respect Palestinians' right to life and security of the person," he said, adding that, "excessive measures which

violate Palestinian human rights will only aggravate the situation.”

Extensive Israeli search operations and arrests of Palestinians have been reported. In East Jerusalem, measures include authorisation to ‘lock-down’ areas, punitive home demolitions and a ban on reconstructing those homes.

“Regardless of the situation, Israeli authorities must not use any measure amounting to collective punishment or which otherwise contravenes international law. The violence was ignited in the context of ongoing violations of human rights of Palestinians living under occupation and such measures only stoke further violence,” warned the Special Rapporteur.

Against the backdrop of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza, and a general lack of accountability, Mr. Wibisono noted that tensions rose further following Israeli imposed restrictions on Palestinian access to the Al-Aqsa compound in East Jerusalem.

“I appeal to Israel to recognise the destabilising effect of the current human

rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” he said. “I remain ready to work with the Government of Israel to move forward towards improving the situation.”

On his own role as Special Rapporteur he further commented: “The situation is extremely volatile across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a former diplomat, I say this is not the time to politicise my mandate, but to recognise that respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, is the first crucial step out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

“I have again written to Israel and formally requested access by the end of 2015,” noted the independent expert whose previous requests for Israeli cooperation and access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory have gone without formal response. The Government of the State of Palestine fully cooperates with the mandate.

The Special Rapporteur will present his next report to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 29th October 2015.

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IX. SECRETARY-GENERAL SENDS VIDEO MESSAGE TO PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE ABOUT ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

On 19 October 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released a video message to Israelis and Palestinians about the escalating violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The following is the transcript of the message (SG/SM/17248):

Salaam Aleykum, Shalom. Today, I would like to speak directly to the peoples of Israel and Palestine about the dangerous escalation in violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, especially in Jerusalem. I am dismayed — as we all should be — when I see young people, children, picking up weapons and seeking to kill.

Let me be clear: violence will only undermine the legitimate Palestinian aspirations for statehood and the longing of Israelis for security.

To the youth of Palestine I say: I understand your frustration. I know your hopes for peace have been dashed countless times. You are angry at the continued

occupation and expansion of settlements. Many of you are disappointed in your leaders and in us, the international community, because of our inability to end this occupation.

And to the leaders of Palestine I say: Harness the energy of your people in a peaceful way to make their dreams and aspirations a reality. You have the right to live a decent life in dignity, respect and freedom.

I know that this is your goal. It is also our goal. But it can only be reached by establishing a Palestinian State living side by side in peace with Israel, not through the violent acts we have been witnessing.

I urge the youth of Palestine — as the future of your people and society — to turn your frustration into a strong, but peaceful, voice for change. Demand that your leaders act responsibly to protect your future. Demand progress for a political solution — from your leaders, from Israeli leaders and from the international community.

I am not asking you to be passive, but you must put down the weapons of despair. To the leaders and people of Israel, let me say: I appreciate your genuine concern about peace and security. I also understand the anger many Israelis feel.

When children are afraid to go to school, when anyone on the street is a potential victim, security is rightly your immediate priority. But walls, checkpoints, harsh responses by the security forces and house

demolitions cannot sustain the peace and safety that you need and must have.

There is no so-called “security” solution. You — the people of Israel — as much as the Palestinian people, need to see a political horizon to break this cycle of violence and fear.

The United Nations stands by you. We will continue to support all efforts to create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations. In this we have never wavered.

And to all I say: Do not allow the extremists on either side to use religion to further fuel the conflict. Palestinian and Israeli leaders: Stand firm against terror, violence and incitement. Demonstrate in both words and deeds that the historic status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem will be preserved.

Reaffirm your commitment to end the occupation and pursue a two-State solution by making changes on the ground. Non-violence requires more courage and strength than violence. At this difficult time, let us say “enough is enough”. Let us stop the posturing and brinkmanship. Let us stop mortgaging the future of both peoples and the region.

Let us get truly serious about reaching the only solution capable of durably stanching the bloodshed, the hatred and the fear of even greater conflict. That is the courage and leadership the peoples of this holy land demand and deserve. Shukran jazeelan. Toda raba. Thank you.

X. SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS OPEN DEBATE ON SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 22 October 2015, the Security Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are the transcripts of the briefing given by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and the statement delivered by the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Amb. María Rubiales de Chamorro of Nicaragua (S/PV.7540 Resumption 1):

Briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has once again entered a dangerous phase. The eruption of violence gripping the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel and Gaza, shows no signs of abating. Between 1 and 21 October, 47 Palestinians and 7 Israelis have been killed, and more than 5,000 Palestinians and about 70 Israelis have been injured. We condemn all attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike in the strongest terms. The recent wave of knife attacks and shootings is particularly appalling. There can be no justification for such despicable acts.

As he reported to the Council yesterday, the Secretary-General travelled to Israel, Palestine and Jordan, where he met with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials and King Abdullah II. In all his exchanges, he condemned and conveyed alarm about the upsurge in attacks and violence over the past two weeks and offered his deep condolences to the people of Israel and Palestine. He also had moving meetings with victims and their families on both sides. The Secretary-General's visit had a clear goal — to support collective efforts to stop the violence, reduce the tensions and incitement and begin to outline a political horizon that can lead to lasting peace and security. President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu assured the Secretary-General that they are working to curb the violence, particularly through continued security coordination. Yet while

they are important, security measures alone will not suffice.

Let us be clear. There is never any justification whatsoever for murder. That should not stop us from asking why the situation has deteriorated. I suggest that this crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had any perception of hope of a viable Palestinian State, if they had an economy that provided jobs and opportunities, or if they had more control over their security and the legal and administrative processes that define their daily existence — in short, if they did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century. Instead, they see the growth of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, which undermine the very possibility of a two-State solution and pose growing security risks to all. They see the emergence of a parallel de facto settler community, with better infrastructure, services and security than in Palestinian-populated areas. With every passing day, their dream of real statehood is becoming more elusive. Nowhere is the frustration and anger at the current situation more evident than among young people.

The current situation also understandably sharpens a sense of fear among the Israeli population. Israeli civilians see the recurrence of violence as a serious threat to their personal security and that of their country. They are also alarmed about signs that anti-Semitism is on the rise

globally. We must understand these Israeli concerns. Israelis see growing attempts in the international community at what they believe is aimed at delegitimizing the State of Israel. When confronted with a climate of terror, Israelis rightly expect their authorities to enforce security.

Taken together, the failed peace initiatives and the reluctance of leaders on both sides to take the bold steps necessary to make progress will create a highly combustible reality in which Israel's security concerns remain unmet and the Palestinian national struggle risks taking on an ever-more violent dimension — and this, in a region already plagued by violent religious extremism.

The Secretary-General condemned the setting ablaze of Joseph's Tomb last week in the West Bank by hundreds of Palestinians. This was a shocking act of violence with the potential to lead to reprisals affecting other holy sites. The sanctity of all holy sites must be respected, especially so as to deny extremist elements any opportunity to transform the current situation into a religious conflict.

Tensions at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem continue to be a dangerous driver of the current wave of violence. This year, during the holy month of Ramadan — the most quiet in 10 years, by the way — Jerusalem welcomed some 3 million visits by Muslim worshippers from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. However, extremists on all sides have sought to disturb the historic status quo. Concerns among Muslims that this is under threat have been exacerbated by irresponsible incendiary statements. These have come from a number of sources and directions, reaching the point that many have become convinced that the Israeli Government plans to violate the historic status quo.

The Secretary-General welcomes Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. But that message will resonate only if swift action is taken on the ground that demonstrates this public commitment. In this regard, we welcome the Prime Minister's decision to ban ministers and Knesset members from visiting the Holy Sites. The Secretary-General encourages Israel and Jordan, in view of its special role as Custodian of the holy sites, to act jointly and coordinate the necessary steps. This would be in line with their previous understandings to ensure that the historic status quo is preserved.

The shocking murders of the Dawabsha family in July and the lack of progress in arresting the perpetrators were another critical trigger of the current escalation. This incident reflects an increasing sense of critical exposure among Palestinians in the face of settler violence and reinforces their feeling of injustice. It is imperative that Israel take action to empower Palestinian institutions to protect vulnerable communities. It must vigorously address the perceived impunity for settler violence by expediting investigations and prosecutions of the Dawabsha family's killers.

The third factor perpetuating the fragile situation is the level of force used by Israeli security forces in countering some of the violence. A number of incidents, many caught on video and widely disseminated, call into question the degree of response, including the apparent disproportionate use of lethal force as a first resort. The Secretary-General has reminded Israeli authorities that live fire should be used only as a last resort in situations of imminent threat of death or serious injury. It is their duty to ensure a prompt and independent investigation into incidents where use of

force has resulted in death or injury, and to ensure accountability where there is evidence of wrongdoing. The Secretary-General is also concerned that Israeli authorities have resumed punitive demolitions, targeting the homes of perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces.

Incitement is another factor significantly fueling the situation. While leaders on both sides have tempered their rhetoric of late, misleading and inflammatory public statements continue to surface from all sides. The vitriolic nature of the public discourse is alarming. Every incident that takes place evokes impassioned narratives and counter-narratives that feed a vicious cycle of hatred and division.

Contrary to the shameful boasts by militant Palestinian groups, including members of Hamas, there is nothing “heroic” about the killing of an innocent man and the serious injury of his wife and 2-year-old child as they walked through Jerusalem’s Old City; or the stabbing of a 65-year-old woman near a bus station in Tel Aviv; or the killing of an Israeli couple while driving with their four children. This is murder, full stop. Crimes like these risk perpetuating the current climate of fear and mistrust. We call on all stakeholders, including the Palestinian leadership, to unequivocally condemn the violence and stand up publicly to extremism and incitement. Failure to do so on the part of both sides leaves the door open for extremists to aggressively promote their destructive agendas.

The first priority for all of us must be the de-escalation of violence. Let me emphasize again, as the Secretary-General did yesterday, that the violence is rooted mainly in the absence of a genuine political

narrative and horizon. Each month we have conveyed to the Council the reality on the ground that is the setting of this latest outbreak. Efforts from all quarters must be intensified to restore Palestinian and Israeli hope that peace is still possible. We must urgently achieve real progress towards a negotiated two-State solution.

To do so, we must see significant change of policies, consistent with prior agreements, that will strengthen the Palestinian institutions, economy and security. That would help create the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. We need to hear Palestinian leaders address sincerely Israelis’ legitimate security concerns and see them take steps to end incitement. To this end, the Middle East Quartet envoys must continue their outreach to regional and international partners to examine how they may contribute to a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. The envoys are planning visits to Israel and Palestine in the coming period.

In conclusion, Palestinians and Israelis deserve a future free from the fear of repeated new rounds of violence. Establishing the beginning of trust between the parties is key to overcoming the painful legacy of this conflict. The United Nations will continue to work at the side of Israelis, Palestinians and international partners to advance this crucial goal towards peace and reconciliation.

Statement by the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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At the most recent Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/PV.7490), we marked the first anniversary of the latest war

on Gaza. At that time three months ago, we noted the continued construction of illegal Israeli settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the demolition of Palestinian houses and orchards, and called on the Council to meet and take action to ensure implementation of its resolutions regarding the question of Palestine. We also warned that ongoing violence in a land so sacred to many peoples and faiths was particularly troublesome.

Today, the situation in Jerusalem is reverberating throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and has reached a point of conflagration that, sadly, validates our darkest fears and predictions. The despairing Palestinian youth in Jerusalem and the West Bank are desperate and being driven to acts of violence, as the only way they feel they will be heard. Israeli communities are acting out of fear, engendering a mob mentality that is adding a dangerous dimension to this current upsurge in violence.

The construction of walls between ethnically different neighbourhoods will not solve any of the problems that led to the current situation. In fact, cementing the borders of illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem will only exacerbate the conflict. The only sustainable way out is to seek a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. That will require an end of the Israeli occupation in all its facets and the emergence of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Unless we, the United Nations, and the Council can provide both peoples with a blueprint of hope for a just solution and an end to this seemingly endless battle — for a future where both can live in peace and

dignity — we will be complicit in the further deterioration of the conflict, which month after month, year after year, becomes increasingly difficult to resolve.

Three months ago, we spoke of a new international awareness that 20 years of bilateral negotiations, plagued by interruptions, had not yielded the expected result, and that a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question might need multilateral efforts. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people therefore salutes the Quartet's efforts to provide such a multilateral framework. We likewise reiterate our position that the initiative of the League of Arab States, which proposes a comprehensive peace agreement that would include the normalization of relations between Israel and the entire region, remains a historic opportunity to bring peace to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, as well as to their neighbours near and far. We urge Israel to seriously weigh that initiative before events on the ground sweep it aside.

This year, which marks 70 years since the founding of our Organization and the fortieth year of our Committee, the Security Council should urgently assume its responsibility for ensuring that the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable rights. Failure to do so would have severe consequences far beyond Jerusalem, Israel and Palestine. If the nations of the world, united through our Organization and in the Council, wish to win the fight against violent extremism in the Middle East and elsewhere, the Council must find and implement a solution to the question of Palestine, with the formula of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Meanwhile, as an immediate priority, the Council should urgently act to guarantee the

status quo with respect to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The proposal to station international observers is promising as a first step towards relieving tensions and re-establishing stability. The Committee on the

Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people reaffirms its commitment to the principle of a peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of those premises.

XI. MIDDLE EAST QUARTET CONDEMNS ALL ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

On 23 October 2015, the Middle East Quartet issued the following statement (SG/2222):

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 United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (represented by United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov) — met in Vienna on 23 October.

The Quartet expresses grave concern over the continuing escalation of tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. The Quartet condemns all acts of terror and violence against civilians.

Underscoring the urgent need to restore calm, the Quartet reiterates its call for maximum restraint and avoidance of provocative rhetoric and actions.

It encourages Israel to work together with Jordan to uphold the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem in both word and practice, recognizing the special role of Jordan as per its peace treaty with Israel.

Recalling its previous statements and relevant United Nations Security Council

resolutions and recognizing that security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence, the Quartet calls for significant steps to be taken, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and hope in the viability of a negotiated two-State solution that resolves the final status issues, including that of Jerusalem, and ends the occupation that began in 1967.

The Quartet reaffirms its strong commitment to act in coordination with regional and international stakeholders in an effort to stabilize the situation and to assure and actively support a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Quartet Envoys will travel to the region in the coming period and engage directly with the parties to encourage them to take concrete actions, consistent with prior agreements, that demonstrate their genuine commitment to pursuing a two-State solution. The Quartet appreciates the willingness of the parties to cooperate with the Envoys in good faith.

XII. SECRETARY-GENERAL WELCOMES ISRAEL'S COMMITMENT TO UPHOLDING STATUS QUO AT HARAM AL-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT

On 25 October 2015, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement (SG/SM/17268):

The Secretary-General welcomes the statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterating Israel's commitment to uphold the status quo at the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem in word and in practice. He notes the Prime Minister's affirmation that Israel has no intention to divide the holy sites and that it respects the importance of the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as reflected in the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, and the historical role of King Abdullah II.

The Secretary-General hopes that strengthened security arrangements between Israel and the Jordanian Waqf should contribute to ensuring that visitors and worshippers demonstrate restraint and respect for the sanctity of the area.

The Secretary-General hopes that the clear, renewed commitments will contribute

to resolving the concerns and put an end to the provocative rhetoric that has added to the tensions and violence over the past weeks.

Only by restoring calm will all parties be able to refocus their efforts on renewing confidence and creating conditions on the ground, in the region and internationally, for meaningful negotiations towards a two-State solution and to put an end to the occupation that began in 1967.

The Secretary-General expresses appreciation for the efforts of United States Secretary of State John Kerry, whose fruitful discussions over the past days with Prime Minister Netanyahu, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan have led to the present outcome.