



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda items 2 and 7

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Human rights situation in Palestine and other  
occupied Arab territories**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 June 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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## **The human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in light of the COVID-19 pandemic**

### **Preamble**

Since the beginning of the spread of the COVID-19, the occupation authorities allowed about 60,000 Palestinian workers in Israel to temporarily reside in Israel for a maximum period of two months during the emergency period, with Israeli employers entrusted with ensuring adequate housing for workers. However, Palestinian workers ended up in poor housing conditions, and have been forced to sleep in construction sites or greenhouses. Israel has also refused testing Palestinian workers for the coronavirus, thereby failing to take adequate measures to limit the spread of the virus in the occupied Palestinian territories, and undermining the Palestinian authority's efforts to curb the coronavirus pandemic among returning workers. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, workers returning to the West Bank from Israel have been a source of many infections in the West Bank.

Therefore, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights submits this intervention to point out the humanitarian violations committed by the occupation authorities after the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus.

In a related context, among the violations committed by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people, a number of Israeli settlers cut down dozens of trees in the village of Al-Khader in Bethlehem, while the occupation forces demolished three houses in the village of Al-Dyouk (west of Jericho), in addition to demolishing tents in Salfit and confiscating them. On March 31, 2020, two Israelis from Ramot settlement tried to intimidate Palestinian citizens in Aqabah Bin Zayed Street in the village of Beit Iksa (northwest of occupied Jerusalem), through spitting on the vehicles entering and leaving the village and the village's public facilities. This incident was not the first of its kind, as the occupation forces had previously spat on Palestinian vehicles parked in the streets of the occupied city of Hebron during their provocative tours. Additionally, on March 29, 2020, the occupation forces tried to open the iron gates and barriers erected along the racial segregation and annexation wall (north of the West Bank), and smuggle a number of Palestinian workers into the occupied territories; undermining the Palestinian authority's precautionary efforts to curb the coronavirus pandemic among returning workers .

It should be noted that there are currently more than 4,520 Palestinians in the occupation prisons, among them 183 children, 43 women, and 700 detainees, all of whom suffer from pre-detention health conditions in Israeli prisons, and are still highly vulnerable to infection with the Coronavirus amid the high rate of Infection transmission in Israel. Maat is deeply concerned about the discriminatory measure taken by the occupying forces. In March 2020, Israel reportedly released hundreds of Israeli prisoners as a precaution, but similar measures were not applied to Palestinian prisoners, which is considered an outrageous discrimination against them and a violation of international law.

Despite guidelines and calls from the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and United Nations human rights experts on the need to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic in places of detention, conditions in Israeli prisons continue to deteriorate, with Palestinian detainees reporting that the Israel Prison Authority imposed new restrictions on purchases from prison restaurants, as well as personal hygiene and medical drugs. Meanwhile, prison service officers routinely search prisoners' rooms, collect detainees, and conduct statistics five times a day, without wearing Protective apparel and gloves, or medical masks. A number of Palestinian prisoners in Ofer prison also recently reported their concerns about an Israeli prison guard being infected with the Coronavirus. On April 1, 2020, it was discovered that Nour El-Din Sarsour, a former Palestinian prisoner, had been infected with Coronavirus, one day after he was released from the Israeli Ofer prison.

In light of the world's preoccupation with war against the novel Coronavirus epidemic, the Israeli authorities continued its flagrant infringement on the rights of the Palestinian people. More than 17,700 settlement units were monitored in Jerusalem in the last two months only,

indicating that the occupation neither care about the epidemic, nor the human war against the Coronavirus, and the process of settlement and annexation of lands continued unabated. In addition to Israel's continued detention campaigns, whether for volunteers or any Jerusalemite activities, and the operations of abuse in the holy towns by using tear gas in Issawiya, Silwan and Qalandia, what is taking place in occupied Jerusalem in particular is a clear and flagrant violation of all International standards, and rise to war crimes in all its dimensions.

Also, 25 Israeli shooting operations against farmers and herdsmen in eastern Gaza and 10 others against fishermen were documented. These operations dropped one injured. Meanwhile, two incursions were documented, along with the arrest of two Palestinians in the central Gaza Strip, one of whom was a child. Since the Palestinian government has declared a state of emergency in the Palestinian Territories, reports has documented carrying out 207 Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

These incursions included the arrest of 191 Palestinians, attacks on dozens of others, and demolishing Palestinian houses. The majority of these operations took place without any preventive measures and without soldiers wearing appropriate masks to prevent the spread of the virus. During the same period, Israeli settlers carried out 19 infiltrations into Palestinian neighborhoods in the West Bank, along with carrying out attacks on the Palestinian population and their property. All this was topped by the suspicious behaviors of Israeli soldiers and settlers, during the storming of Palestinian houses, as some of them spat at parked cars, ATMs and shop locks, which raises fears of deliberate attempts to spread the virus and cause panic in the Palestinian society.

Maat has serious concerns about the Israeli authorities' flagrant violation of its international obligations regarding the right to healthcare for Palestinians living under occupation, as restricting the freedom of movement of patients and health workers already undermines the right of Palestinians to access health care, and in light of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the conditions of patients are deteriorating rapidly as the symptoms have become more severe. In addition to the martyrdom and injury of Palestinians at the hands of the occupation forces, Israeli occupation forces and settlers continued to siege and restrict freedom of movement in the occupied Palestinian territories, detain, torture and other use all forms of inhuman treatment against Palestinian, annex and seize lands for the purpose of settlement, and demolish the occupied city of Jerusalem's houses and installations.

## **Recommendations**

Maat for Peace calls on all international institutions, especially the United Nations, the international community, and all the free people in the world to uphold their responsibilities towards the Palestinian people, and to work immediately to stop the daily and continuous crimes committed by Israel (the occupying Power) against the Palestinian, and to obligate Israel to implement the obligations set forth in international legitimacy decisions, and all relevant decisions in order to reach a just solution based on two states, in line with international laws and decisions, and the Arab Peace Initiative, and in a way that secures international protection for the Palestinian people, through ending the occupation and empowering Palestinians to exercise their rights of freedom and independence on their independent land with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital. Maat also stresses the need to stop building Israeli settlements, and the importance of continuing pressure on the occupation forces to release all Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and the need to enforce the relevant rules of international law to limit the spread of the global epidemic, and to hold Israel accountable for the lives of prisoners. Maat stresses its full support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital.