



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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I. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL RELEASES REPORT ON ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN WOMEN

On 5 January 2018, the Secretary-General released his report, “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian Women”, which will be presented during the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women”, 12-23, March 2018. The conclusions and recommendations of the report are reproduced below ([E/CN.6/2018/6](#)):

Conclusions and recommendations

53. Palestinian lives and livelihoods and the enjoyment of human rights by Palestinians continue to be seriously affected by more than 50 years of the military occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel, including a 10-year closure of the Gaza Strip, as well as by the Palestinian political divide. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by unstable political circumstances that systemically create gender-based vulnerabilities. They also experience multiple forms of violence, based on the continuing military occupation, human rights violations and a growing humanitarian crisis, compounded by conservative traditions and patriarchal norms. Limited access for women to employment opportunities and sustainable financial income, an overwhelming share of care responsibilities, and the marginalization imposed owing to geographical fragmentation and the related restriction of movement, exacerbate women’s vulnerability to violence and limit their opportunities to access protection, justice and security services.

54. The accession of the State of Palestine to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an important step towards greater recognition of the human rights of women. It is commendable that the State of Palestine submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The report is scheduled to be considered by the Committee at its seventieth session, to be held in July 2018. Relevant Palestinian authorities and the Government of Israel have a critical role to play in eliminating discrimination against women and upholding women’s human rights, ensuring accountability, respect for the rule of law and women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in governance processes. The State of Palestine is encouraged to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as an accountability tool under international human rights law. There is an increased need for the availability of both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis on the situation of Palestinian women,¹ the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the lack of progress in finding just and enduring peace. However, data disaggregated by sex and age, as well as gender analysis more broadly, have not yet been sufficiently utilized to inform related reporting and briefings on the situation of Palestinian people to other intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council. In addition, options for facilitating direct inputs from women’s civil society organizations to discussions on related themes should be considered.

55. Increased efforts are needed to improve women’s economic empowerment. There is a need to focus on the interlinkages between the supply and demand sides of the labour market. This requires the design of practical interventions that promote the demand for

¹ These data have been included in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women since the 1980s.

women's labour while continuing to address the institutional and market impediments facing women's participation in the labour market. Women are entering the labour force in increasing numbers, but face numerous barriers notwithstanding their advanced education. An important starting point would be to challenge cultural stereotypes according to which women work only in certain fields or are better off working at home, and to identify women's real needs when they seek to enter the workforce and find stable employment. Robust social policies that support those needs, such as childcare, flexible working hours, policies that support work/life balance, and public awareness campaigns in support of working women, are essential.² National institutions should also address the lack of affirmative policies that promote the hiring of women. Labour laws and regulations should address existing gaps with respect to women's right to work and rights at work to promote gender equality in all sectors of the workforce.

56. National institutions should be supported in adopting holistic approaches to education, health and social services. Enhancing education quality and relevance can be achieved through the adoption of a more proactive approach to gender mainstreaming and inclusive and transformative education. Giving priority to women's health can be achieved through a public health perspective that is not limited to maternal and child health but also addresses Palestinian women's health needs regardless of their age and marital status.

57. Building an accurate understanding of the patterns and drivers of gender-based violence cannot be isolated from the impact of the overall political, humanitarian and economic context created by the prolonged occupation and other political realities in terms of increasing the risk and vulnerability for gender-based violence. While global standards for addressing gender-based violence emphasize the need for effective national systems that guarantee security, justice and protection for women, Palestinian women are denied those guarantees in the Gaza Strip and in parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation has severely limited the possibility of advancing protection through legal frameworks for addressing gender-based violence. The fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the closure imposed on Gaza have caused services, capacity and expertise to be made available only in certain areas. United Nations entities need to continue to work to strengthen services for survivors of gender-based violence and to address gaps in the quality, accessibility and sustainability of services. All actors should place greater focus on income generation for survivors of violence and on the provision of independent housing in which women survivors and their children may live free of abuse. The United Nations system should also support the institutionalization of violence prevention and response, particularly in areas most affected by conflict.

58. The United Nations humanitarian country team should continue to build on the foundation for a strengthened gender focus (in analytical, programmatic and institutional terms) in humanitarian action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to ensure the capacity to identify and respond to priority gender needs in the humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors should continue to ensure a shift in humanitarian approaches and mechanisms to guarantee effective protection and access to assistance for women and girls in humanitarian crises, including the full and meaningful participation and leadership of

² ILO, *The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study* (forthcoming). ⁴³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns, update August 2014.

women in all stages of humanitarian action, as well as adequate funding for gender-sensitive response.

59. The promotion of gender equality, and the empowerment of women and their human rights, remain essential to efforts for the realization of just and durable peace and sustainable development in the Middle East. A strong normative framework is in place at the global level on women and peace and security, with regional and national policies and action plans providing additional guidance on its operationalization. Continued efforts should be made by the Palestinian Authority and all other actors to fulfil commitments relating to women and peace and security and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leaving no one behind.

II. UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS WELCOME RESUMPTION OF POWER SUPPLY TO GAZA, CAUTION MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE

The following [press release](#) was issued on 10 January 2018 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.

UN human rights experts have welcomed the announcement that power cuts imposed on Gaza for the past six months were being lifted, but cautioned much more must be done to alleviate the human-caused suffering in Gaza.

On 7 January 2018, Israel began to resupply Gaza with 50 megawatts (MW) of power, which it had suspended last June at the request of the Palestinian Authority.

“This restoration of the pre-June 2017 levels of electricity will ease the suffering of the two million inhabitants of Gaza,” said the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Mr. Michael Lynk. “Over the past six months, Gazans have had access to power for only approximately four hours daily, and often less.

“However, much more is required,” he said. “We call upon all the responsible parties – Israel, the Palestinian Authority, as well the authorities in Gaza – to restore the conditions to allow a full supply of electricity to all Gazans. We also urge Israel, the occupying power, to end its decade-long blockade of Gaza.”

The electricity cut left homes without power to run basic appliances; workplaces were closed or reduced their productive hours; hospitals were shuttered and health care services were significantly reduced, with operating theatres dependent on generators; and Gaza’s sewerage plant could not operate resulting in over 100 million litres of raw sewage being dumped daily into the Mediterranean.

“Deprivation of electricity and other basic services essential to a life of dignity and wellbeing violates the right to housing,” said Leilani Farha, the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing. “This deprivation of power amounts to collective punishment of the Gazan population. This is illegal under international law.”

III. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CRITICIZES ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DECISION TO ADVANCE SETTLEMENT UNITS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

The following [statement](#) was issued on 11 January 2018 by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov:

In the aftermath of the decision to advance over 1,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, I reiterate that Israeli settlement construction is illegal under international law and is one of the major obstacles to peace. I urge the Israeli authorities to cease and reverse such actions.

Settlement-related activities undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution. They entrench a one-state reality that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

The Special Rapporteurs noted that Gaza requires between 450 and 500 MWs of electricity daily for a fully functioning economy and society. Even with the restoration of pre-June 2017 electrical power levels, Gaza will only receive or generate about 210 MWs of power daily, less than half of the daily required electrical power.

IV. STATE OF PALESTINE JOINS PROTOCOL ON EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

The following press [release](#) was released on 11 January 2018 by the United Nations Office at Geneva:

The State of Palestine, on 29 December 2017, joined Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), becoming the ninety-fourth High Contracting Party to the Protocol.

The State of Palestine is a High Contracting Party to the CCW. It joined the framework Convention on 5 January 2015 along with Protocol I on Non-Detectable Fragments and Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons. It now has joined three of the five Protocols to the CCW.

The President-designate of the 2018 Twelfth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, Ambassador Mouayed Saleh, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Office at Geneva, welcomed the news of the State of Palestine's accession to Protocol V on ERW.

"I warmly welcome the States of Palestine's accession to CCW Protocol V and encourage more States to consider acceding to the Convention and its Protocols. I also invite those States that have yet to join to participate in the work of the Convention as observers," Ambassador Saleh stated.

The purpose of the Convention and its Protocols is to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. The Convention attempts to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations. Prohibitions or restrictions on the use of specific weapons or weapon systems are the object of the Protocols annexed to the Convention.

Protocol V establishes that States which participate in armed conflict have a responsibility to assist with the clearance of explosive remnants of war resulting from the conflict. The Protocol recognizes the serious post-conflict humanitarian problems caused by ERW, arising from unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive weapons, and sets out a range of measures to prevent and remedy these problems.

V. UNRWA FACES FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE UPHOLDING ITS MANDATE WITH THE REDUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES' FUNDING

The following [statement](#) was released on 17 January 2018 by UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl:

Not for the first time in its proud history, UNRWA faces a formidable challenge in upholding its mandate – an expression of the will of the international community – and preserving key services like education and health care for Palestine Refugees.

Today, the US government has announced a contribution of \$60 M, in support of our efforts to keep our schools open, health clinics running, and emergency food and cash distribution systems functioning for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. While important, this funding is dramatically below past levels. The total US contribution in 2017 was above \$350 M.

Since UNRWA began its operations in May 1950, every US administration – from President Truman onwards – has stood with and provided strong, generous and committed support to our Agency. The US has consistently been UNRWA's largest single donor, something we sincerely thank the American people for, and countless American decision-makers – presidents, members of Congress, diplomats and civil servants, who embodied the commitment of assisting a vulnerable people through UNRWA.

Funding UNRWA or any humanitarian agency is the discretion of any sovereign member state of the United Nations. At the same time, given the long, trusted, and historic relationship between the United States and UNRWA, this reduced contribution threatens one of the most successful and innovative human development endeavors in the Middle-East.

At stake is the access of 525,000 boys and girls in 700 UNRWA schools, and their future. At stake is the dignity and human security of millions of Palestine refugees, in need of emergency food assistance and other support in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At stake is the access of refugees to primary health care, including pre-natal care and other life-saving services. At stake are the rights and dignity of an entire community.

The reduced contribution also impacts regional security at a time when the Middle East faces multiple risks and threats, notably that of further radicalization.

In addition, the US government has consistently commended our high-impact, transparency and accountability. This was reiterated, once again, during my latest visit to Washington in November 2017, when every senior US official expressed respect for UNRWA's role and for the robustness of its management.

Faced with the responsibility to preserve operations while now confronted with the most dramatic financial crisis in UNRWA's history, as Commissioner-General, I am today:

- Calling on the Member States of the United Nations to take a stand and join UNRWA in saying to Palestine Refugees that their rights and future matter.
- Calling on our partners – the host countries and our donors including those in the region – to rally in support and join UNRWA in creating new funding alliances and initiatives to ensure Palestine Refugee students continue to access education in our schools and the dignity of Palestine refugee children and their families is preserved through all our services.
- Calling on people of good will in every corner of the globe where solidarity and partnerships exist for Palestine Refugees to join us in responding to this crisis and #FundUNRWA to ensure that Palestine Refugee girls and boys can stand strong.
- Launching in the next few days a global fundraising campaign to capture the large-scale commitment to keeping our schools and clinics open throughout 2018 and beyond.

At this critical time, I also turn to:

- Palestine Refugees in all of our fields of operations and say: we are working with absolute determination to ensure that UNRWA services continue.
- The students in our schools for example in Aleppo and Damascus, Syria, in Burj El Barajneh and Rashidieh, Lebanon, in Zarka and Jerash, Jordan, in Jenin and Hebron, West Bank, in Jabalyia and Khan Younis, Gaza, to the boys and girls in all Palestine refugee camps and communities, I say: the schools remain open so you can receive your cherished education and remain confident that the future also belongs to you.
- The patients in our clinics, the recipients of our relief, social services, micro-finance and other forms of support, I say you will receive the care and assistance to which you are entitled.
- UNRWA's full-time 30,000 professional and experienced staff – doctors, nurses, school principals and teachers, guards and sanitation laborers, social and psychosocial workers, administrative and support staff: be at your duty stations to serve the community with the same dedication and commitment that you have always shown. This is a moment for internal cohesion and solidarity. Times are very critical but we will do our utmost to protect you.

We see a Middle-East where conflict, violence and polarization remain ever present and impact the lives of millions of people. We observe a world in which anger reigns, not trust; a world in which power frequently rules, not justice; a world in which what divides is often valued more than what unites, includes and brings together.

The state of the world and the situation of Palestine Refugees is however far too serious and important, to allow ourselves to indulge in pessimism or despair. UNRWA stands for hope, for respect of rights and for dignity. When things are difficult, our determination grows. When the way seems lost, we invest all our energy in search of new paths, keeping our eyes on the horizon and looking for different solutions.

I recall the profound responsibility assumed by the international community of states to assist the Palestine refugees, until a just and lasting solution is found to their plight and the Middle East can finally put this cruel conflict behind it. I also give homage to people of good will around the world who have shown solidarity with Palestine Refugees when they need it most. Now more than ever, the refugees need your support.

Let us draw our strength from the Palestine Refugees who teach us every day that giving up is not an option. UNRWA will not give up either. I ask you to stand with us.

VI. ACTING HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT EXPRESSING DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE REDUCTION IN FUNDING TO UNRWA

The following [statement](#) was released on 17 January 2018 by the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Roberto Valent:

I am deeply concerned about the significant reduction in funding for UNRWA, which is critical to the provision of humanitarian assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Some 2.5 million Palestinians in this area, or about half of the population, need humanitarian aid, including 1.4 million Palestine refugees, who are among the most vulnerable groups in the oPt. The reduction is particularly worrying against the backdrop of an overall decline in humanitarian funding in the oPt in recent years.

Some 53 per cent of the funding requirements for humanitarian interventions in the oPt for 2018 are for UNRWA activities, in the areas of health, food security, shelter, water and sanitation, and education among others; US\$286.7 million out of \$539.7 million.

It is crucial that decisions related to humanitarian financing be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, in order to ensure that the essential needs of the most vulnerable are met. Member states are encouraged to increase funding towards meeting humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip at this critical juncture.

VII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 25 January 2018, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from his briefing ([S/PV.8167](#)):

Too often we have met in this Chamber and said that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is at a critical stage, that the situation on the ground is unsustainable. We have all fallen into the paradigm of managing, rather than resolving, the conflict. There are those who believe that the conflict can be solved through peaceful bilateral negotiations and compromises by addressing the final status issues of borders, security, refugees and the status of Jerusalem on the basis of prior agreements and the relevant United Nations resolutions. They believe that to resolve the conflict one must have two States, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. Some believe in making unilateral moves that can lead only to a one-State reality that is incompatible with the aspirations of both peoples.

And there are those who believe in violence, who are convinced that confrontation is the only option. They do not recognize that both Palestinians and Israelis — Jews, Christians and Muslims — have a legitimate national, historic and religious connection to this land. They believe that one side has to lose for the other to win; that the land can, and should, belong to only one people.

We — the United Nations, the Security Council, the international community — have a responsibility to prove that those who believe in violence and confrontation are wrong. We have a responsibility not only to prove them wrong, but to work with the Palestinian and Israeli leaders to effect a return to the negotiations table and to quickly show tangible results that will empower those who believe in peace and thwart those who uphold terror.

This year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Oslo Accords. While its daring vision for peace remains to be fulfilled, now is not the time to give up on Oslo. The alternative is not a better deal, but a worsening reality of occupation and humiliation. Now is the time to push for policies on the ground that rebuild trust; now is the time to engage on final status issues on the basis of international consensus; now is the time to show political leadership to remove the obstacles to a sustainable solution. And what is a sustainable solution, some may ask? I believe it is one that resolves all claims and allows Israelis and Palestinians to separate and live in peace as neighbours and partners whose security will be forever linked, yet who each manage their own affairs in a State of their own.

Now is the time for leadership. Make no mistake: while the current negative environment and dynamics may have been exacerbated by rhetoric and recent events, they are not new. The lack of political will to take meaningful action, to restore confidence and resume negotiations and the propensity to take unilateral decisions have been there for years. During that time, various peace efforts have repeatedly floundered — victims of political agendas designed to sabotage progress towards realizing a two-State solution, or victims of the fear of making historic compromises with the past in the interest of the future.

That paralysis has elicited a heavy price, namely, continued violence and insecurity; an ever-expanding settlement enterprise; a persistent Palestinian political divide; and a deteriorating,

unsustainable situation in Gaza under the control of Hamas. Taken together, those elements kill hope, breed frustration and increase radicalization on the ground. Our choice today is clear. We either take urgent concrete steps to reverse that perilous course, or risk another conflict and humanitarian disaster.

In that regard, let me begin today by expressing my deep concern about funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) this year. While the recent pledge by the United States of \$60 million is appreciated, it represents a significant reduction of its traditional contribution, thereby increasing anxiety for the community of 5.3 million Palestine refugees, who have already suffered the longest protracted refugee crisis in the world — 70 years.

Given tensions on the ground, I welcome UNRWA's firm commitment to continue providing services to Palestine refugees on an uninterrupted basis. Shutting down or reducing services at this critical time would further destabilize a region riddled with conflict, insecurity and radicalization. On 22 January, UNRWA launched a global fundraising campaign aimed at raising approximately \$500 million to keep its schools, clinics, relief and other services open throughout 2018 and beyond. I thank the Member States that have already joined this global campaign to further support UNRWA, and I encourage others to follow suit.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to exact a steady human cost on the ground. Protests and a relatively low level of violence across the West Bank and Gaza have continued following the United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, on 6 December.

Since 18 December, seven Palestinian civilians, including three children, have been killed by the Israeli security forces during protests and clashes — four in the Gaza Strip and three in the West Bank — and another two Palestinians died of wounds sustained in protests during the previous two weeks. I note the concern expressed on 19 December by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that the use of force must be calibrated and that lethal force should be used only as a last resort, in situations of imminent threat of death or serious injury, with any resulting fatalities properly investigated by the authorities. I urge the Israeli security forces to exercise maximum restraint to avoid casualties in such circumstances.

On 9 January, an Israeli civilian was shot dead in a drive-by shooting attack near Nablus. There is no justification for terror or for those who condone, praise or glorify it. The perpetrators of that attack must be brought to justice. Subsequently, on 18 January in Jenin, one Palestinian was killed and several others arrested during a raid that the Israeli military conducted reportedly in search of the perpetrators of the 9 January attack.

The reporting period also saw Palestinian militants fire eight rockets and mortars from Gaza, with three falling inside Israel, causing damage but no injuries. In response, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) targeted Hamas military sites in Gaza, with no reported injuries as well. The IDF also destroyed a tunnel from Gaza extending into Israel and Egypt under the Kerem Shalom crossing, the third such action over the past three months. I have repeatedly stated that all militant activity, including the digging of tunnels and the firing of rockets, in Gaza must cease. It threatens the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike, increases the risk of a new escalation of hostilities, undermines calls for lifting the closures and ultimately damages the prospects for peace.

Israel's settlement activities continue despite broad international condemnation. On 10 January, the Israeli planning authorities advanced plans for over 1,400 housing units in Area C settlements. Additionally, one plan for nine housing units in Psagot was approved for construction. Separately, four tenders were published for approximately 500 units that had been processed in 2017. In comparison, tenders for only 50 units were opened for bidding in the whole of last year. In addition, the authorities announced that some 10 new tenders for 880 housing units in seven settlements will be published in the coming weeks.

Settlement construction is illegal under international law and is one of the major obstacles to peace. Settlement-related activities undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution. Two recent developments further fueled perceptions that the forces that want to block a two-State solution in Israel are gaining ground.

On 31 December, the Central Committee of the Likud party adopted a resolution calling for “unhindered” settlement construction and to “extend Israeli law and sovereignty in all the areas of liberated settlement in Judea and Samaria”. While not binding, the resolution increases the political pressure for annexation of parts of the West Bank and further undermines Palestinian belief in peace efforts. Days later, the Knesset passed an amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, which is likely to make it more difficult in any future peace agreement for Israel to transfer control over areas currently within the area it defines as Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction to Palestinian authority.

The demolition of Palestinian-owned structures has also continued, with 16 structures demolished due to the lack of building permits that are nearly impossible to obtain, as noted in the Quartet report of 2016. Fourteen Palestinians have been displaced by these actions. Four additional structures were destroyed during a military operation in Jenin, displacing another 16 Palestinians. Of particular concern is the risk of demolition of 46 school structures in Area C and East Jerusalem.

As the security forces continue to arrest Palestinians in various security operations — some 400 have been detained over the past month — I want to highlight one particular case. On 1 January, 12 charges were brought against Ahed Tamimi, a 16-year-old Palestinian girl arrested in December. Her detention followed the release of a video in which she was seen slapping and kicking two Israeli soldiers in her front yard. On 17 January, an Israeli military court ruled that she would be held until the end of legal proceedings against her. As stated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 16 January, the detention of a child must only be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time. I reiterate the High Commissioner's call that the treatment of all minors be in accordance with international law and the special protection that it grants to children.

On the Palestinian political front, I want to report to the Council that in response to the United States decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and following the General Assembly vote on 21 December, the Palestinian Central Council met in Ramallah on 14 and 15 January. In its final statement, the Central Council, *inter alia*, rejected the United States as a partner until it cancels this decision and rescinds both the designation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as a terrorist organization and the closure of the PLO office in Washington, D.C. The Central Council further declared that the Oslo process was no longer valid and tasked the PLO

Executive Committee to suspend the recognition of Israel until it recognizes the State of Palestine and annuls its annexation of East Jerusalem, to halt security coordination and to revisit economic relations with Israel. We are yet to see whether these decisions will be adopted by the PLO Executive Committee and implemented. Under the current circumstances, however, I encourage all parties to refrain from action and rhetoric that would further undermine the chances of returning to meaningful negotiations and to continue their engagement in the interest of peace.

Turning to Gaza, the worsening humanitarian and security crisis continues to feed a deteriorating situation. The implementation of the Egyptian brokered intra-Palestinian agreement has effectively ground to a halt. The two sides have been unable to reach agreement, particularly on key obstacles including the collection of taxes, the integration of and payment of salaries to public-sector employees, the status of the return of Government administration in the ministries and other institutions and, ultimately, security control of Gaza. These challenges must be quickly overcome or the process risks being derailed entirely, leaving Gaza primed for a new escalation.

Despite these setbacks, I am encouraged that the Gaza crossings continue to be controlled by the legitimate Palestinian authorities after their handover on 1 November. I also welcome the decision of the Palestinian Authority on 3 January to resume payments for the full amount of electricity — 120 megawatts — purchased from Israel for Gaza, allowing for an increase in supply to six-to-eight hours of electricity per day.

The humanitarian situation, however, remains dire. With the current funding available, the United Nations will not be able to provide fuel to hospitals and critical infrastructure in Gaza beyond the end of February. I also take note of Israel's decision to approve some 85 private-sector projects through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism since the start of the year. Yet, these positive developments are not an alternative to the lifting of closures on Gaza and to returning the Strip to the full control of the legitimate Palestinian Authority. The combustible cocktail of humanitarian, political and security challenges must be addressed urgently and effectively.

In an effort to support the peace process and address the dire situation in Gaza, Norway and the European Union will convene an extraordinary session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians on 31 January at the ministerial level. This important meeting aims to bring all parties together to discuss measures to accelerate efforts that could underpin a negotiated two-State solution and to enable the Palestinian Authority to resume full control over Gaza. I call on the parties to work constructively and produce tangible outcomes that support these objectives.

...

In closing, I wish to emphasize the gravity of the current challenges.

Twenty-five years after the Oslo Accords, we are at a critical point in the peace process. The uncertainty and volatility of the current environment are hardening positions and sharpening the rhetoric on all sides — a situation that plays directly into the hands of extremists and increases the risk of another conflict. Absent a credible proposal that could become the basis of final-status negotiations, the international community must continue to build the conditions necessary for a resumption of talks. We must also reaffirm the international consensus that the two-State solution

remains the only viable option for a just and sustainable end to the conflict. We must be unwavering in this position.

At the same time, it is vital to maintain support for strengthening Palestinian institutions and enhancing service delivery to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Allowing the Palestinian project to backslide at this delicate stage risks further destabilizing an already precarious situation. The recent cuts to the funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East only reinforce these concerns.

As far as Gaza is concerned, I call on the international community to support efforts to return the Strip to the control of the Palestinian Authority. If the process stalls, the people of Gaza will face increasingly desperate conditions and will lose hope of any progress. I commend Egypt for its leadership role and continued commitment to this process.

We can wait no longer to reverse the current negative trajectory of the conflict. Every illegal settlement advancement, every person killed and every failed effort in Gaza makes it more difficult for Palestinians and Israelis to overcome their divisions, rebuild trust and invest in the goal of resolving the conflict. It is time to break the destructive pattern and begin again to lay the foundations of peace.

VIII. STATEMENT BY CHAIR OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE AT SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

On 25 January 2018, the Chair of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Amb. Fodé Seck, made the following [statement](#) at the Security Council open debate on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”:

...

I reiterate the deep concern of the members of the Committee over recent developments on the ground that continue to undermine hopes for a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. Certainly, the almost unanimous support of the members of the Security Council in December for draft resolution S/2017/1060, on Jerusalem, and the General Assembly's subsequent adoption of resolution ES-10/19 on 21 December 2017, at the tenth emergency special session, demonstrated the already obvious, unwavering commitment of the international community to a peaceful solution to this dispute. That resolution declared null and void any decision or action intended to alter Jerusalem's character, status or demographic composition and called on all States to refrain for the time being from establishing diplomatic missions in the holy city. The Committee is convinced that, pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions and the long-standing international consensus, that Jerusalem remains a final-status issue to be resolved through negotiations.

The Committee is also concerned that Israel, as the occupying Power, has recently adopted measures imposing changes to the status quo on the ground. Those measures include the adoption of a law earlier this month by the Israeli Parliament that would prevent any future Israeli Government to cede any part of Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem, to an independent Palestinian

State in the framework of negotiations. Furthermore, the central committee of the ruling majoritarian party in Israel recently adopted a resolution calling for the imposition of Israeli law on all settlements in the West Bank, de facto annexing them. If that resolution were to become law, it would close the door to a negotiated solution and constitute a violation of successive Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2017). In addition to being illegal under international law, those decisions undermine the two-State solution and, in that respect, must be rejected by the international community.

It is incumbent on the international community, especially our Council, to assume its responsibility to uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence as a sovereign and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. As the Committee remains resolutely committed to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, it condemns all forms of violence and incitement to hatred and extremism, regardless of the perpetrators or motives. For that reason, the Committee invites the international community to pursue its long-standing efforts to support, inter alia, inter-Palestinian reconciliation, guarantee the financial viability of Palestinian institutions and strengthen Palestinian capacity-building to prepare them to manage an independent State, freed from the occupation.

In that connection, the Committee calls on Members, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, to strengthen support and assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose humanitarian and development work is indispensable to millions of Palestinian refugees. As key pillars, those institutions bring hope and stability to the Palestinian people, especially the young, in a region that is experiencing severe convulsions.

As the Committee continuously repeats, there is no alternative to the two-State solution, the international community must continue and scale up its action with all stakeholders so that the people Palestinian people, like all other peoples, including the Israeli people, can enjoy an independent and sovereign State within viable and internationally recognized borders, living in peace and security alongside its neighbours, including the State of Israel. In that spirit, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will continue to deliver on its mandate to achieve those ends.

IX. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES REPORT ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SETTLEMENTS IN THE OPT

On 26 January 2018, The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report entitled “Database of all business enterprises involved in the activities detailed in paragraph 96 of the report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” ([A/HRC/37/39](#)). Below are the preliminary observations and recommendations:

Preliminary observations of responses of business enterprises

49. In communicating with companies and reviewing publicly available information, OHCHR encountered a number of companies that acknowledged some connection to the settlements and provided explanations of their involvement on a number of grounds. A summary of the most common explanations are set out below. OHCHR offers the following observations in response in the interest of continuing the dialogue with companies.

50. A major argument used by companies to explain their involvement in listed activities is that they provide jobs to Palestinian families and help to support the Palestinian economy.

51. OHCHR observes that this argument does not recognize that the presence of the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is unlawful, serves to depress the Palestinian economy and to reduce opportunities for Palestinian businesses to thrive. As pointed out by the fact-finding mission, the agricultural sector, which lies at the heart of the Palestinian economy, has been in a continuous decline since 1967 owing to the dispossession of land and the denial of access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural areas, water resources and trade markets (A/HRC/22/63, para. 89). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 70 per cent of Area C is “off limits for Palestinian use and development”, as it falls within the boundaries of regional settlement councils. Palestinian construction is heavily restricted in 29 per cent of Area C, and only the remaining 1 per cent has been planned for Palestinian development.⁴³ The World Bank has acknowledged that the land allocated for settlement activity in Area C has “significantly reduced land available for use by the Palestinian private sector”.⁴⁴ In East Jerusalem the situation is similar, as 35 per cent of land has been allocated to settlements and only 13 per cent is zoned for Palestinian construction.⁴⁵

53. The depressed Palestinian economy has had a direct effect on the job market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to UNCTAD, Israel's full control over Area C, which accounts for over 60 per cent of the area of the West Bank, has contributed to a “permanent unemployment crisis” in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that forces thousands of unemployed Palestinians to seek employment in Israel and in settlements in low-skill, low-wage manual activities (TDB/63/3, para. 6). In 2017, the International Labour Organization reported that the “stagnating labour market in the West Bank pushes Palestinians to take up work wherever it is to

⁴³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns, update August 2014.

⁴⁴ World Bank Group, *Prospects for Growth and Jobs in the Palestinian Economy: A General Equilibrium Analysis*, November 2017.

⁴⁵ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns, update August 2014.

be found.”⁴⁶

54. OHCHR notes that the employment of Palestinians, even on favourable terms, does not exempt businesses of their responsibilities under the Guiding Principles concerning their overall engagement in or with the settlements. The Guiding Principles make clear that, while business enterprises may undertake certain commitments or activities to support and promote human rights, these “do not offset a failure to respect human rights throughout their operations.”⁴⁷

55. Another argument used by some business enterprises to explain their involvement in listed activities was that they did not take a political position in the conflict between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, nor did they actively support Israel's occupation of Palestine. OHCHR recalls, however, that the political position of business enterprises is not a relevant consideration in determining whether their actions are consistent with the Guiding Principles or whether their business activities fall within the ambit of Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

56. Some companies that acknowledged operating in or with the settlements highlighted the fact that they were acting in compliance with Israeli national laws and in accordance with all required permits and authorizations.

57. According to the commentary to Guiding Principle 11, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights “exists over and above compliance with national laws and regulations protecting human rights”.⁴⁸ Compliance with the national laws and regulations of a State does not necessarily equate to compliance with the Guiding Principles or international law. In the case of Israel, its national laws and regulations that allow for the establishment, maintenance and existence of the settlements are in direct conflict with international law, as settlements are widely recognized by the United Nations and the international community as being illegal.

58. Some companies indicated that they had no knowledge or control over the actions of other entities with which they had business relationships, such as distributors, partners or other entities in their value chains, and therefore they should not be held responsible for any harm caused by those entities.

59. According to the Guiding Principles, the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights extends to their business relationships. Guiding Principle 13 states that businesses are responsible for preventing or mitigating adverse human rights impacts directly linked to their operations, products or services through their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to them; this includes impacts caused by both actions and omissions.⁴⁹ The responsibility to conduct due diligence — and in the occupied territory this involves enhanced due diligence (see para. 37 above) — entails taking active steps to identify and assess any actual or potential adverse human rights impacts made as a result of business relationships.

60. Furthermore, in its report, the fact-finding mission stated that business enterprises conduct their activities in the settlements with “the full knowledge of the current situation and the

⁴⁶ International Labour Office, The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 106th session, 2017, para. 21.

⁴⁷ Commentary to Guiding Principle 11.

⁴⁸ See also Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, statement (see footnote 14), pp. 11-12.

⁴⁹ Commentary to Guiding Principle 13.

related liability risks” and “contribute to their maintenance, development and consolidation” (A/HRC/22/63, para. 97).

Recommendations

61. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urges all businesses with which OHCHR has been or may be in contact in carrying out its mandate under Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 to cooperate with OHCHR with a view to engaging in constructive dialogue.

62. The High Commissioner acknowledges with appreciation the extension granted by the Human Rights Council for OHCHR to implement the mandate under resolution 31/36. Recognizing that this was the first time OHCHR has been tasked with such a mandate, the High Commissioner is satisfied that significant progress has been made. However, while the dialogue with concerned business enterprises is continuing, the work remains ongoing. For the High Commissioner to update the database as required by resolution 31/36, more resources are required.

X. UNRWA LAUNCHES US\$ 800 MILLION APPEAL FOR SYRIA, GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

On 20 January 2018, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) released the following [press release](#):

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has launched an appeal for its emergency programmes of over US\$ 800 million; approximately US\$ 400 million each for Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which consists of Gaza and the West Bank. The appeal also covers some 50,000 Palestine refugees from Syria who have fled to Lebanon and Jordan.

At a launch event in Geneva, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, explained that the majority of Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory and from Syria “rely on UNRWA to provide aid which is literally life-saving, including food, water, shelter and medical assistance. Our appeal,” he said, “enables UNRWA to continue delivering desperately needed relief to those affected by deepening emergency situations. However, the Agency’s critical financial crisis following the reduction in US funds threatens our ability to deliver these vital services.”

Inside Syria, UNRWA is reaching over 400,000 Palestine refugees with cash assistance, one of the largest such programmes in an active conflict setting anywhere in the world. Despite the immense security challenges, UNRWA is providing education to over 47,000 Palestine refugees, supplementing regular classes with psychosocial support and safety-awareness training. For those unable to reach our classrooms, UNRWA has developed distance-learning materials.

In Gaza, with employment opportunities stifled by the decade-old blockade – the unemployment rate remains among the highest worldwide – almost one million Palestine refugees are dependent on UNRWA for emergency food assistance, a tenfold increase on the 100,000 that required such support in 2000. Three and a half years on from the 2014 hostilities, which caused

unprecedented destruction and loss of life, thousands of Palestine refugee families remain displaced and repairs to over fifty thousand homes have yet to be completed.

The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains fragile. Palestine refugees continue to experience difficult socioeconomic conditions rooted in occupation-related policies and practices imposed by the Israeli authorities. In addition to continued movement and access restrictions and shelter demolitions, Palestine refugees in the West Bank experience high levels of food insecurity.

Mr. Krähenbühl stressed that “supporting UNRWA emergency appeals is not a substitute for an urgently needed political solution to the underlying conflict. It is, however, fundamental to sustaining the dignity and strength inherent in the Palestine refugee community.”

XI. INTERNATIONAL DONOR GROUP FOR PALESTINE (AHLC) HOLDS EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF IN BRUSSELS

On 31 January 2018, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) held its first ever extraordinary meeting in Brussels. Below is the [press release](#) issued after the meeting reflecting remarks by Norway’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide, who chaired the meeting.

The goal is a negotiated two-state solution that allows Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security. Because the situation is so difficult it is important to meet at this juncture. The atmosphere of the meeting was constructive’ she said.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Eriksen Søreide chaired an extraordinary meeting of the international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in Brussels today. The meeting was hosted by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini. Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah led the Palestinian delegation, which included Foreign Minister Riad Malki. The Israeli delegation was led by Minister of Regional Cooperation Tzachi Hanegbi. Foreign ministers and senior politicians from a number of donor countries took part, as did US Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt.

The AHLC is the only international forum where both parties participate in a dialogue with the donors and the international community. This is the first meeting at political level between the Palestinians and the Israelis since the US recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December.

‘A key goal of today’s extraordinary meeting of the AHLC was to bring the parties and the international community together to support the political negotiations and to promote concrete measures to achieve the two-state solution. The donors have also pledged to continue to provide support for Palestinian state- and institution building, stressed Foreign Minister Eriksen Søreide.

‘The participants expressed grave concerns about the humanitarian and economic crisis in Gaza. The international community has made it clear that the Palestinian parties must overcome their internal divisions and that the Palestinian Authority must regain control over Gaza,’ Ms Eriksen Søreide said. The participants also stressed the importance of the Egyptian initiative to restore the Palestinian Authority’s control over Gaza. The international community urged the

Palestinian parties to take steps to ensure that public employees can be paid by the Palestinian Authority. The issue of the security forces in Gaza must also be resolved.

The Palestinian Authority's budgetary situation is difficult, and will become even more so when it takes over control of Gaza. Ms Eriksen Søreide stated that Norway would maintain its support for the Palestinians and urged other donors to provide financial assistance. The donors also expressed deep concern about the financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The participants expressed support for restarting a political process to resolve the outstanding final status issues. Foreign Minister Eriksen Søreide emphasised that Norway expects that the US will put forward a proposal that can lead to the resumption of negotiations between the parties on all outstanding issues, including borders, security, settlements, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, and water. Ms Eriksen Søreide also stressed that work is under way to put in place various measures that can lead to growth in the Palestinian economy. This includes cooperation between the parties on infrastructure projects in the water and energy sectors.

In recent years, the donor group has held two ordinary meetings a year. The next ordinary meeting of the AHLC is planned to be held in Brussels on 20 March.
