



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

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

April 2016
Volume XXXIX, Bulletin No. 4

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I. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S DECISION TO SUSPEND THE IMPORT OF CEMENT INTO GAZA

On 4 April 2016, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#) on the suspension of the private import of cement into Gaza:

The United Nations has been informed by Israel of its decision to suspend the private import of cement into Gaza following allegations that a substantial amount had been diverted from its intended legitimate beneficiaries.

We are working closely with our Palestinian and Israeli Government counterparts to assist in resolving the situation in order to prevent incidents that could lead to any future suspension of imports.

The people of Gaza depend on the entry of construction material to repair and reconstruct their damaged and destroyed houses following the 2014 conflict and to enable much needed infrastructure and development projects.

Those who seek to gain through the deviation of materials are stealing from their own people and adding to the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. The reconstruction of Gaza remains critical to ensuring its stability and I urge a rapid resolution of this matter.

II. UNRWA CONDEMS DEMOLITIONS BY ISRAEL

On 7 April 2016, UNRWA issued the following [press release](#) on the demolition of homes by the Israeli Authorities in the Bedouin refugee community of Um al Khayr:

UNRWA condemns today's large scale home demolitions by the Israeli Authorities in the Bedouin refugee community of Um al Khayr in the South Hebron Hills. As a result, 31 Palestine refugees, including 16 children, were made homeless. This community has endured several rounds of demolitions and often faced harassment from the nearby illegal settlement of Karmel.

"I am appalled. Looking in the eyes of a young Bedouin boy in a red shirt standing amongst the crumpled ruins of his demolished home, how can anyone justify this?" stated Lance Bartholomeusz, Director

of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank. Already this year, over 700 Palestinians have been displaced by Israeli demolitions in the West Bank. This figure is approaching the total number of displaced for all of 2015.

UNRWA is gravely concerned about demolitions in violation of international law. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention destruction of private property is prohibited. As Occupying Power, Israel is obliged to administer the occupied territory for the welfare of the protected Palestinian population. As the UN has said repeatedly, these demolitions must stop.

III. UNESCO DIRECTOR-GENERAL CALLS FOR NEW EFFORTS TO BUILD TRUST BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS IN JERUSALEM

On 17 April 2016, the UNESCO Executive Board took decisions on issues relating to the Middle East, including on the World Heritage Site of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. The following is an excerpt of the [comments](#) UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova made after the decisions were taken:

Jerusalem is a Holy Land of the three monotheistic religions, a place of dialogue for all Jewish, Christian and Muslim people, nothing should be undertaken to alter its integrity and authenticity. It is a mosaic of cultures and peoples, whose history has

shaped the history of all humanity. Only respect and dialogue can build the trust we need to move forward — this is the strength of UNESCO, for the benefit of all.

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IV. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 18 April 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are excerpts from the briefing ([S/PV.7673](#)):

...

Allow me to begin with my visit to Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia three weeks ago with the President of the World Bank, Mr. Jim Yong Kim. Our trip sought to highlight the need to increase development assistance through innovative financing mechanisms for countries, like Lebanon and Jordan, that are disproportionately impacted by the conflict in Syria. Last Friday, together with the Presidents of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, I co-chaired a ministerial-level conference to garner the financial support for that initiative. I am pleased to inform members that we had an encouraging response. Eight countries and the European Union generously pledged \$1 billion for a concessional loan facility, \$141 million in grants and \$500 million for a guarantee facility. In addition, many other countries expressed support for this innovative initiative and their intention to provide financial support. I hope that donors will

continue to respond to this effort to invest in peace and stability in the region.

For over six months, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory have been gripped by a surge in violence, triggered by individual terrorist attacks by Palestinians. Approximately 30 Israelis and 200 Palestinians have been killed, with most of the Palestinians killed while reportedly carrying out knife, gun or car-ramming attacks. I condemn all such attacks unreservedly. There can never be any justification for stabbings, vehicle attacks, shootings, incitement to violence or the glorification of killers.

I welcome the joint Palestinian-Israeli efforts that have contributed to a reduction of tensions in recent weeks. However, these latest killings have only deepened the divisiveness, hatred and grief. I also welcome the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian security discussions on Area A. I urge all sides to recognize the risks of failing to

reach a lasting understanding on this pressing matter. I acknowledge the recent public statements by President Abbas rejecting violence and terror and firmly supporting continued security coordination with Israel. President Abbas and I discussed the importance of those and other issues in Amman on 27 March. I encourage more such statements, backed by concrete actions. Israelis and Palestinians need their leaders to elevate public discourse above mutual accusations and to engage in a constructive dialogue that can rebuild the trust that has all but evaporated.

The Middle East Quartet is moving forward on a report that will review the situation on the ground and the threats to a two-State solution and provide recommendations on how to advance peace. The report is intended to help inform international discussions to advance the two-State solution: a sovereign and independent State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. Tragically, that solution seems more distant than it has for many decades. A 20-year-old Palestinian living under occupation has seen no political progress at all during his or her lifetime. Impatience and despair at that fact is one of the root causes of the violence that blights Israeli and Palestinian communities, prevents economic development and growth and denies the human potential of millions of people. It is incumbent upon all of us to do everything in our power to secure lasting peace.

Our collective efforts face dynamics in Israel and Palestine that call into question the willingness of the parties to overcome the hurdles to peace. Israel continues to demolish Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank at an alarming rate. The total number of demolitions in 2015 was exceeded in early April of this year. More than 840 people have been displaced.

Most of the structures concerned are deemed illegal by Israel because they were built without permits; yet Israel makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to acquire permits. These acts raise concerns that Israel intends to implement over 11,000 outstanding demolition orders in Area C of the West Bank.

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

Meanwhile, settlement plans and retroactive legalizations continue to advance in almost untraceable steps through the complicated planning process. Those steps, together with last month's declaration of "State land" — the first in over 18 months — signal that Israel's strategic settlement enterprise continues to expand on land intended for a future Palestinian State. I once again reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the two-State solution.

The creation of new facts on the ground through demolitions and settlement-building raises questions about whether Israel's ultimate goal is in fact to drive Palestinians out of certain parts of the West Bank, thereby undermining any prospect for a transition to a viable Palestinian State.

On the Palestinian political front, I regret the continued failure of intra-Palestinian discussions to achieve genuine unity on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the Palestine Liberation Organization principles. I reiterate my call on Palestinian factions to demonstrate their commitment to

reconciliation, which is integral to reaching the goal of Palestinian statehood and to securing a just and lasting resolution to the conflict. It is imperative for all factions to ensure that both Gaza and the West Bank are returned to the control of a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian Authority.

I am extremely concerned by today's announcement on the uncovering of a tunnel crossing from Gaza into Israel — the first such discovery since the 2014 Gaza conflict. I strongly condemn the construction of attack tunnels as dangerous and provocative moves that not only threaten the lives of Israelis and Palestinians, but also undermine efforts to rebuild Gaza. Furthermore, three rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel on 14 April, all of which landed short of Israel. No injuries were reported. I call upon all parties to refrain from any actions that could lead to renewed conflict in Gaza.

The Palestinian Government has laid out an ambitious \$3.8 billion agenda for stabilizing Gaza, repairing damage from the 2014 conflict and getting a recovery under way. Economic development and rebuilding critical electricity and water infrastructure

are essential. On 8 April, the Gaza power plant shut down, meaning that residents of Gaza are now supplied with electricity for just four to six hours per day. More than a year and a half after the conflict in Gaza, those conditions are intolerable. I strongly encourage all Member States to fulfil their commitments to support the reconstruction and development of Gaza.

More positively, on 3 April, Israel expanded the Gaza fishing zone from six to nine nautical miles. I welcome that development and encourage Israel to expedite further easing measures to support the long-suffering people of Gaza.

...

The path out of the current political deadlock requires commitment, compromise, mutual respect and leadership on both sides. It also requires the acceptance — demonstrated by deeds as well as words — that the two-State solution is the only road to peace that meets the national aspirations of both peoples: Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

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V. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CONDEMNS BOMB ATTACK ON A BUS IN JERUSALEM

On 18 April 2016, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#) on the bomb attack:

I strongly condemn today's terrorist bomb attack on a bus in Jerusalem which has reportedly injured at least 15 Israelis, two of them seriously. Our thoughts and prayers go out for their full recovery.

Terrorism and violence can never be justified and the perpetrators of this heinous

act must be brought to justice. I urge all leaders to work together to avoid escalation and counter the extremist forces seeking to destabilize the situation.

It is unacceptable that some have praised this act that will only fuel more hatred and further undermine prospects for peace.

VI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE

On 19 April 2016, the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued the report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. The report, which provides an update on changes on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) since the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) on 30 September 2015, covers the period 1 October 2015 to 31 March 2016. It outlines key issues and concerns from the perspective of the United Nations. The following is the executive summary of the [report](#):

Executive Summary

The reporting period was characterized by heightened violence that took place against a backdrop of growing concern that the current negative trends on the ground — including, inter alia, ongoing settlement and related activity, incitement to violence, and the absence of genuine Palestinian unity — are imperilling the viability of a two-state solution. The international community led by the Middle East Quartet, continued its efforts to establish an environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations to end the conflict. At the operational level, initiatives were led by the Israeli and Palestinian finance ministers to explore ways to revive the Palestinian economy and improve the day-to-day lives of Palestinians, and by Israeli and Palestinian officials on Palestinian security control over Area A. Progress towards peace was slowed, on the Israeli side, inter alia by continued settlement activity, and declaration of land in the West Bank as State Land. On the Palestinian side, despite continuing national reconciliation discussions held in February and March in Qatar, Palestinian factions have been unable to reach consensus on achieving genuine Palestinian unity, on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the PLO Principles.

A protracted humanitarian crisis prevails in the occupied Palestinian territory. Some 1.1 million people in the West Bank and some

1.3 million people in Gaza, over 900,000 of them refugees, need some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016. In the West Bank increased restrictions on movement, particularly stringent in Hebron and East Jerusalem at the height of the recent violence, disrupted livelihoods and service delivery, worsening the humanitarian crisis. In Gaza the negative effects of the closure was exacerbated by the inability of the Government of National Consensus (GNC) to take up its full governance responsibility, adding further stresses to an already-vulnerable population. Nineteen months after the ceasefire, some 75,000 people remained displaced waiting for the reconstruction of their homes. Despite some relaxation by Israeli authorities on movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, a range of measures continue to make it difficult for Palestinians in Gaza, including those in need of medical treatment, to travel out of the Strip.

The human rights situation deteriorated in the reporting period with a rise in clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli Security Forces, increased instances of punitive measures against families of alleged perpetrators of attacks and the ongoing practice of administrative detentions. The United Nations calls for the calibrated use of force, clear rules of engagement for security forces in line with international law and standards, and robust systems of accountability and redress.

Demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures more than doubled in the reporting period as compared with the previous six months. This included punitive demolitions of the family homes of perpetrators of attacks against Israelis and a manifold increase in demolition of donor-funded structures. The United Nations repeatedly called for an immediate freeze on such practices. Total demolitions by mid-April already exceeded the total recorded in all of 2015.

A number of key development indicators are cause for concern. Severely limited Palestinian access to land and natural resources in Area C continues to constrain economic development and hinder private investment. No new outline plan in Area C has been approved in the reporting period. The unemployment situation remains dire. High unemployment rates and a lack of a political horizon, particularly in Gaza, risks fueling radicalization of youth and creating an even more unstable situation. The current rate and pattern of growth will not create sufficient jobs for Palestine's growing labour force. Employment generation needs to be mainstreamed in the Palestine Government's new National Policy Agenda and sectoral strategies. Israel needs to ease the physical, material and political constraints to employment generation, *inter alia* by easing movement and access restrictions and further enabling trade by Palestine, especially from Gaza.

Steady progress has been made on the reconstruction of Gaza. More than 90 per cent of health and education facilities

damaged or destroyed during the conflict in 2014 have been repaired. Repair of the water infrastructure and housing repairs has also seen progress, whereas housing reconstruction —where the hostilities rendered houses uninhabitable - has been slower. Structural barriers however continue to impede recovery. Investment in the recovery of the productive sectors has also lagged. Funding shortfalls are delaying reconstruction; donors need to disburse Cairo pledges and allocate new funds to enable Gaza's reconstruction and recovery to continue at pace.

The GRM has enabled a significant increase in the entry of construction material to Gaza, but only a lifting of the closures and reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian Authority, will allow the people in Gaza to fully rebuild their lives and livelihoods. In the short term, it is critical that the dual-use list be reviewed and revised.

The chronic shortages of energy and water in Gaza are particularly urgent. Gaza's coastal aquifer will become saline this year and contamination has rendered Gaza's groundwater unusable. Gaza's water crisis cannot be solved without tackling the energy crisis. Until natural gas can be delivered to Gaza's power plant, additional energy needs to be imported from Israel. This requires a high voltage (e.g. 161kv) line. There is also a need for an immediate, substantial increase of fresh water supply from Israel, until long term solutions, such as the full construction and operation of desalination plants, can be implemented.