



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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

## **I. WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN FORUM ADOPTS MALTA DECLARATION**

*At the conclusion of the Western Mediterranean Forum that was convened in Valletta, Malta, on 5 and 6 October 2012, WMF Members adopted the Malta Declaration. The Declaration as forwarded in a letter by the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/C.1/67/2) on 11 October 2012). The letter and the Declaration were discussed at the First Committee under Agenda item 99 entitled “Strengthening of security and cooperation”. The following are excerpts of the Declaration:*

THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT of the Member States of the Western Mediterranean Forum, namely, Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia, meeting on the occasion of the 5+5 Dialogue Summit in Valletta on 5 and 6 October 2012 at the invitation of the Head of Government of Malta, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, and with the participation as observers of the President of the European Commission, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, the Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union, the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, and the representative of the League of Arab States;

FULLY CONSCIOUS of the vast common heritage of Mediterranean civilization, history and culture that characterizes the sociocultural fabric of the Euro-Mediterranean region and of the shared aspirations by the peoples of the region for a partnership in democracy, stability, security and prosperity;

REAFFIRMING that the 5+5 Dialogue, being the core of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and representing a model of North-South partnership, represents a fundamental instrument for the consolidation of the complementarity and solidarity among the two shores of the Western Mediterranean;

RECALLING the Tunis Declaration released at the First Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Western Mediterranean Forum in December 2003 and the conclusions of the last foreign ministerial meeting held last 20 February in Rome, as well as the sectoral ministerial meetings held since then;

HAVING reviewed the present Summit agenda issues and exchanged views on how to further promote the Western Mediterranean Forum’s contribution to enhanced dialogue, constructive regional cooperation and integration;

DECLARE the following:

...

### **Regional security and stability**

Premising that collective security and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region are indivisible and that the cooperative security philosophy nurtured over these last two decades has developed into strategic significance to the region in the assessment of countering sources of insecurity and common threats in regional dynamics,

The 5+5 Dialogue:

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- While recalling the Rome Conclusions of the 5+5 Dialogue Foreign Ministerial meeting, reiterates its stance on the shared position that a just, comprehensive and

lasting peace in the Middle East must be achieved through the resumption of negotiations on all final status issues that are conducive to a two-State solution with a State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. The 5+5 affirms its shared position not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties, including with regard to Jerusalem. It stresses its common position that Israeli settlements anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace;

- Welcomes the reconfirmation by international donors of their assessment of the state readiness of the Palestinian Authority, regarding institutions during the last Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) meeting. It expresses grave concern at the severe fiscal crisis and economic slowdown that hamper the Palestinian Authority's ability to sustain its state-building achievements. The 5+5 Dialogue calls on international donors to meet the financing gap of the Palestinian Authority treasury and, while recalling the last AHLC Chair's Summary, calls on Israel to take positive steps to enable sustainable economic development in the Palestinian territories, including in area C and in the Gaza Strip;

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## **II. COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ADOPTS ANNUAL REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*At its meeting on 8 October 2012, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People adopted its annual report to the General Assembly (A/C.183/2012/CRP.2). The conclusions and recommendations contained in the report are reproduced below (A/67/35):*

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

78. Throughout the reporting period, the Committee continued to work for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects, resulting in an end to the occupation and the independence of a sovereign, viable, contiguous and democratic Palestinian State based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194

(III). It urged the international community to continue its support for the Middle East peace process, promoted international action against obstacles in its path, particularly the ongoing illegal Israeli settlement campaign, and engaged with diverse constituencies in support of peace, such as women and youth. It continued to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinians, while bringing to light the economic costs of the Israeli occupation which constrain Palestinian economic, social and institutional development. The Committee raised international alarm about the plight of the Palestinian prisoners and called for their

release and an end to abusive practices by Israel, including administrative detentions.

79. The reporting period marked the one-year anniversary of the 23 September 2011 submission of the application for United Nations membership by Palestine, and the adoption by the Quartet of a timetable for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a view to reaching an agreement by the end of 2012. The Committee is concerned that the positive momentum towards the two-State solution generated by these developments appears to have dissipated, while other crises competed for international attention. The Committee remains convinced that a durable settlement of the conflict is prerequisite for just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is of the view that progress on the Palestinian status at the United Nations will generate a new dynamic in the peace process and help safeguard the two-State solution, as would the recognition of the State of Palestine by additional Member States. The Committee regrets that the series of “exploratory” meetings between the parties in Amman in January 2012 and subsequent contacts have not yet resulted in resumed negotiations. The main reason remains the continuation and expansion by Israel of its illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and its refusal to commit to the longstanding parameters of the peace process based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. The international community needs to maintain its focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, uphold its legal obligations in this regard, and present bold initiatives to break the current deadlock. The Committee shares the concern that any attempts to maintain the status quo will not just delay the two-State solution but may usher in a one-State reality

with unpredictable consequences. The Committee calls on the international community to take serious and concrete action which would compel Israel to stop its illegal settlement activities and to genuinely commit to ending its 45-year military occupation and to making peace. The dispatch of a fact-finding mission by the Human Rights Council is a welcome first step towards accountability. The Committee joins calls on the Security Council Members to undertake a mission to the region to examine the situation first hand and to uphold its Charter duties to contribute tangibly to the efforts to advance a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole and to the establishment of peace and security in the Middle East region.

80. The Committee has consistently supported the Palestinian State-building and reform agenda. It is concerned that its accomplishments are now endangered due to the debilitating financial crisis experienced by the Palestinian Authority, and it calls on donors to meet their prior commitments and provide emergency aid to buttress the two-State solution. Progress towards that goal also requires all Palestinian factions to unite behind the legitimate leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. The Committee urges a speedy and good faith implementation of national reconciliation agreements.

81. The Committee remained deeply concerned by the ongoing violence and the gross violations of humanitarian and human rights law. The Committee reiterates its condemnation of all attacks against civilians including rocket fire from Gaza, air strikes on populated areas, and settler violence. It calls on the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to act urgently to guarantee the protection of civilians.

82. As the Gaza blockade reached its five-year mark, the Committee was greatly alarmed by the conclusions of a recent United Nations study that the damage to its economy, infrastructure and resources is becoming so irreversible thus threatening Gaza's future viability. The Committee remains convinced that any sustainable recovery would require a complete lifting of the blockade by Israel. It would also require the dismantlement of the Israeli occupation and its associated regime of settlements, checkpoints, the separation wall, demolitions, land confiscations and expulsions, which have been on the rise, with the worst abuses occurring in East Jerusalem and in Area C. The Committee calls in this regard for the transfer of additional territories in Area C to the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority as envisaged in the Oslo Accords.

83. The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights will continue through their mandated activities to generate heightened international awareness of the question of Palestine, as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful and constructive contribution of the Division in support of its mandate aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. It notes with satisfaction: (a) 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 adopted resolutions, international meetings and conferences, and commemorations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; (b) 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, as evidenced by the number of civil society conferences, public forums, meetings and consultations between the Committee and civil society organizations; and (c) increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the increase in the number of access to the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and other information materials on the "Question of Palestine" website. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority carried out by the Division has proved its usefulness as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee strongly recommends that that important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further enhanced.

84. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2013, implemented by the Division, on widening international support for the achievement of inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to their homes and property. The programme will also focus on strengthening international support for the permanent status negotiations and contributing to the creation of a favourable international atmosphere for their conduct in good faith. The Committee intends to mobilize increased international scrutiny of the developments on the ground, in particular the halt of all settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and an end to all other illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It will support global campaigns to challenge Israeli impunity and promote the concept of Israeli accountability for its actions towards the Palestinian people.

85. The Committee will continue to pay special attention to highlighting the plight of the most disadvantaged Palestinians, such as the Palestine refugees, the Palestinians living in Gaza and Palestinian political prisoners. The Committee will continue to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to facilitate the viability of the Palestinian State. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just solution of all permanent status issues. The Committee wishes to contribute to efforts towards ending incitement on both sides, provide a venue to have the narratives heard and reconciled and, with the help of civil society, to promote peace education. It will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth and their organizations in this process. The Committee also wishes to work towards Palestinian reconciliation and will strive to involve in its events Palestinians from different ends of the political spectrum.

86. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people and welcomes the growing calls from civil society groups for peaceful protests against the status quo. It lauds the courageous advocacy actions of countless activists, including eminent personalities and parliamentarians, who participate in demonstrations against the wall, try to break the siege of Gaza and keep their home constituencies informed about the harsh realities of life under occupation. The Committee also recognizes the sacrifices made by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails who have risked their lives to help end illegal Israeli policies, including that of administrative detention. 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. It will continue to assess its programme of cooperation with civil society and consult them on ways to enhance their contribution. The Committee appreciates the support it receives from the Secretariat in strengthening cooperation with civil society.

87. The Committee looks forward to further develop 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 the two-State solution and ensure respect for international law, in accordance with their international obligations.

88. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities. The Division should pay special attention to continued development of the “Question of Palestine” portal and use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. The Division should also continue to develop the UNISPAL document collection by reflecting the issue of the hour and enhancing subject-based search capability, as well as by continuing to digitize and upload historic documents and to develop user-friendly search features such as the French titles project. The Division should continue collaborating with the United Nations Libraries at Headquarters and at Geneva in search for historic documents. The Division should further develop the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority paying special attention to the programme’s gender balance and reviewing logistics to allow the maximum number of participants possible. It should continue to organize the annual

observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

89. 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 public opinion of the relevant issues. The Committee requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

90. 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 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.

### **III. SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON ATTACKS AGAINST PALESTINIAN FARMERS IN THE WEST BANK**

*The following statement was made on 14 October 2012 by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, on repeated attacks on Palestinian farmers in the West Bank:*

I am alarmed at recent reports that Israeli settlers in the West Bank have repeatedly attacked Palestinian farmers and destroyed hundreds of their olive trees at the height of the harvest season. These acts are reprehensible and I call on the Government of Israel to bring those responsible to justice.

Israel must live up to its commitments under international law to protect Palestinians and their property in the occupied territory so that the olive harvest – a crucial component of Palestinian livelihoods and the Palestinian economy – can proceed unhindered and in peace.

### **IV. UNESCO DIRECTOR-GENERAL CONVENES MEETING ON SAFEGUARDING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN JERUSALEM**

*The following press release was issued on 14 October 2012 by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization:*

On 14 October 2010, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova convened Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian experts for a ‘brainstorming meeting’ to reactivate the UNESCO Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Wall, building on the constructive decision taken at the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee in Brasilia last August.

In her opening remarks, the Director-General underlined UNESCO’s involvement in the Old City’s preservation, noting that the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls were inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1981 and on the List of the World Heritage in Danger since 1982.

“Over decades, UNESCO has undertaken missions to Jerusalem and carried out a number of projects. But much



remains to be achieved for the conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem. In 2001, UNESCO launched an international initiative for the safeguarding of the Old City during the 31st session of [the Organization's] General Conference, which was adopted at the 32nd session in 2003, aiming at a comprehensive Action Plan for the conservation and safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. Guidelines for such a Plan were designed by an international committee of experts composed of 12 international experts which met in 2005 and 2006, advising UNESCO's Secretariat in its task," underscored Irina Bokova.

The Director-General went on to highlight that the elaboration of the Action Plan was undertaken in a spirit of cooperation with all the concerned parties and had been welcomed by UNESCO's Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee in 2007. "Taking into account the specific conditions prevailing in the Old City of Jerusalem, it was agreed to follow a pragmatic approach and, therefore, the outlined Action Plan identified short, medium and long-term objectives, including training, educational and cultural activities, and the preservation of sites and monuments of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls," she said.

Irina Bokova recalled the request made by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in Brazil to send a joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to assess and advise on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan, and emphasized that cultural heritage protection and conservation lie at the very core of UNESCO's mandate and long-standing expertise.

In conclusion, the Director-General expressed her hopes of success in the

meeting's deliberations and called on the participants to assure the international community that the parties concerned with the safeguarding of the Old City of Jerusalem are willing to cooperate.

Participants included - From Israel: Michael Turner, Chair, Israel World Heritage Committee. From Jordan: Moawiyah Ibrahim Yousuf, President, the Society of Friends of Archaeology and Heritage; Abdallah Al-Abbadi, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Director of Al-Aqsa Mosque; and Abdel Sami Abu Diyeh, Department of Antiquities of Jordan. From Palestine: Hamdan Taha, Director of the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage; and Nazmi Al-Jubeh, Birzeit University. From ICCROM: Mounir Bouchenaki, Director-General.

At the meeting, the group of experts recommended enhancing confidence and cooperation among concerned parties and experts in order for them to work better in a sensitive and complex environment. Another recommendation was to identify appropriate mechanisms for UNESCO to improve technical assistance for the implementation of the Action Plan and the safeguarding of the values of the site, including the provision of advice, the granting of permits, the facilitation of works, and the free access to the sites.

The group of experts also suggested strengthening sensitisation and awareness programmes, including academic cooperation and cultural activities, notably towards youth and women. They finally recommended the fielding of a joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to identify, in cooperation and consultation with the concerned parties, appropriate operational and financial mechanisms and modalities to strengthen technical cooperation.

## **V. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 15 October 2012, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Excerpts of the briefing are reproduced below (S/PV.6847):*

While the world's gaze of concern points elsewhere in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict drifts dangerously in a direction that must be avoided. Both sides maintain their rhetorical commitment to a negotiated peace; however, the creeping realities on the ground and the stalemated diplomacy portray a more worrying situation. Stated intentions to adhere to a two-State solution are not translating into meaningful steps to renewed dialogue on the core issues to be resolved, and this should be a matter of great concern to the Council.

We heard a restatement of these intentions during the speeches of both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to the General Assembly on 27 September (see A/67/PV.12). At the same time, citing the absence of a political process, President Abbas announced his intention and initial consultations to seek an upgrade of Palestine to non-member State observer status — a move that Israel rejects as unilateral and an impediment to resuming negotiations. We hope that this development can be addressed in a constructive manner, and we remind everyone that a negotiated two-State solution, to which both leaders are committed, must remain the highest priority. We fear, however, that the door for such a solution may be closing before our eyes.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLIC) meeting of 23 September brought into sharp focus the severe financial crisis that the Palestinian Authority is experiencing as a result of

combined shortfalls in domestic revenue, tax income and donor contributions. In his message, the Secretary-General reiterated the United Nations view that the vision of the two-State solution and the institutional achievements of the Palestinian Authority are key elements of stability. Let me repeat today his call for preserving those achievements and for ensuring the Palestinian Authority's fiscal viability by helping to bridge its immediate funding gap. As we have said before, all those States that verbally support the Palestinian people can demonstrate their commitment in a tangible way by offering financial help that provides the Palestinian people with jobs, services and security.

The figures speak for themselves. As of 11 October, the Palestinian Authority had not yet set a date for the payment of Government employees' salaries for the month of September. While recent contributions from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Japan, the Netherlands and France are welcome, they do not suffice. A predictable and immediate injection of new funds is required in order to finance the deficit, which is currently projected to reach \$1.3 billion by the end of the year.

The AHLIC also called upon Israel to help facilitate the sustainable growth of the Palestinian economy by taking further steps to improve the movement of people and goods, development and trade and exports in Gaza and the West Bank, including in Area C and East Jerusalem. Such steps ought to include measures to address the lack of

adequate planning for Palestinian communities, as well as measures to develop socioeconomic infrastructure, such as support to the agricultural sector in Area C — an area fundamental to the contiguity of the West Bank and the viability of a future Palestinian State.

The United Nations welcomes the recent approval by the Government of Israel of 15 schools and health centres in Area C, and hopes to see similar action in the processing of the 32 master plans submitted to the Israeli authorities. Indications that plans for six Palestinian localities may soon be published for ultimate approval are also encouraging. Yet further progress to address the planning needs of over 200 Palestinian communities in Area C remains essential.

Violence and other sources of tension on the ground make it all the more difficult to overcome the political stalemate. We remain concerned about security in the West Bank. Twenty-nine incidents involving settler violence resulted in injuries to 10 Palestinians, as well as damage to property. The Dormition Abbey in East Jerusalem was desecrated with graffiti on 2 October as part of so-called price tag activities.

The annual olive harvest, which has just begun, is an important economic, social and cultural event for Palestinians. However, in recent years, the Israeli military has limited access of Palestinian farmers to their olive groves next to settlements to mitigate the risk of violence. In a particularly disturbing development, approximately 7,000 Palestinian-owned olive trees have been destroyed, damaged or harvested by Israeli settlers since the beginning of 2012. We note that on 4 October, the Israeli police arrested three settlers allegedly involved in so-called price tag activities.

We urge the Government of Israel to take effective measures to curtail such acts in the lead up to the harvest season and, more generally, to hold accountable those responsible for violence.

Settlement activity continued. Of note, the outpost of Migron was evacuated to a nearby settlement and the outpost is now used by the Israeli Defence Forces. The United Nations position remains that settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, whether on private land or elsewhere, is illegal under international law and contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map, and should be put to a halt.

On five occasions between 27 September and 7 October, Israeli extremists entered the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound, intending to perform religious rituals. Clashes with Muslim worshippers resulted in injuries to five Palestinians, while Israeli forces arrested a number of Palestinians and Israelis for violation of visiting regulations and disturbance of public order. Also, on 4 October over 1,000 Israelis entered Joseph's Tomb near the city of Nablus to perform religious rituals. Despite prior coordination, this move resulted in clashes with Palestinians. The status of Jerusalem and the religious sites are sensitive issues that will be fully resolved only in final status negotiations. In the meantime, we strongly urge all sides to exercise restraint and safeguard the sanctity of religious sites.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis were, comparatively speaking, on the rise during the reporting period. Four Israelis were injured and material damage was caused. Incidents of stone and Molotov-cocktail throwing at Israeli vehicles travelling in the West Bank were recorded on four occasions. On 10 October, an Israeli was stabbed and

injured near the Gush Etzion settlement by a Palestinian, who was subsequently arrested by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Citing security concerns, the Israeli Defense Forces had conducted 226 operations in the occupied West Bank as of 9 October, which resulted in 87 Palestinians being injured and 182 arrested. On 25 September, Israeli forces uncovered a weapons cache near Hebron. Almost daily clashes were reported between Israeli forces and Palestinians at the Qalandiya checkpoint. Most injuries took place during Palestinian demonstrations, including against the barrier, which deviates from the Green Line in contravention to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273).

Allow me to say that the right of peaceful protest must be upheld and that all protests should be kept strictly non-violent.

Demonstrations also took place on 2 October to protest the plight of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli jails. The United Nations continues to call for a reasonable resolution to those cases and recalls its position that the use of administrative detention must be exceptional and of short duration.

Palestinian security forces continued their efforts to preserve law and order in the West Bank. Between 18 and 19 September, they arrested 57 militants affiliated with Hamas throughout the West Bank, which led to the discovery, on 23 September, of a Hamas underground bunker in the village of Urif, near Nablus.

Palestinian local elections are on schedule for 20 October. The Palestinian Central Elections Commission has been carrying out preparations in accordance with the local electoral law and calendar. Some

4,700 candidates were nominated, nearly a fourth of them women, and electoral campaigning commenced on 6 October. Elections will take place in the West Bank only, as the de facto authorities in Gaza have not allowed the Central Elections Commission to proceed with voter registration and related electoral preparations in Gaza. Meanwhile, in Israel, Prime Minister Netanyahu recently announced that he will be presenting a bill to dissolve the Knesset in preparation for early elections.

Turning to Gaza, sporadic eruptions of violence were recorded during the reporting period. A serious escalation occurred when, on 7 October, an Israeli air strike killed an alleged militant and seriously injured another, as well as eight civilians. Some 50 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza into Israel the following day. Another serious escalation took place this past weekend when, on 13 October, an Israeli air strike killed a Salafi leader and his assistant, while two civilians were injured. Yesterday, two Israeli air strikes resulted in three Palestinian militants killed and three injured, including two critically. Overall for the reporting period, a total of 72 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel, resulting in some material damage.

During the same period, Israeli forces conducted three incursions and 11 strikes into Gaza, resulting in the death of 8 alleged Palestinian militants and 1 civilian, as well as injuries to 5 Palestinian militants and 17 civilians, including 4 children. That latest episode demonstrates the continuing fragility of the situation in Gaza and highlights the vulnerability of the civilian population. We continue to condemn all rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. The de facto authorities have the responsibility to prevent and stop all such attacks. We also urge Israel to show maximum restraint.

We must all work to ensure that calm is realized, the closure regime is lifted and the Palestinian divide ends. Regrettably, there is no new progress to report in ending that divide.

Lifting the closure regime in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) and Gaza's recovery and long-term economic growth remain fundamental objectives of the United Nations. In that regard, we note the recent transfer of an order of school furniture from Gaza to the West Bank commissioned by the Palestinian Authority. On 19 September, the World Food Programme (WFP) transported 1.2 million fortified date bars produced in Gaza to its West Bank school meals initiative. That WFP initiative was the first such delivery from Gaza to the West bank in five years. Those are positive steps towards reinstating commercial transfers to the West Bank. However, much more is required. Lifting restrictions on the entry of aggregate, iron bar and cement would not only enable the growth of private sector but also provide an additional source of revenue for the Palestinian Authority.

In the meantime, a steady flow of approvals for works involving dual-use material should be maintained. We welcome the recent approval by the Government of

Israel of an additional \$38 million worth of project work, including schools, shelters and solid-waste treatment infrastructure, raising the value of United Nations implemented works involving material subject to approval to approximately \$400 million since May 2010.

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Let me conclude with a reminder that, amid the seismic shifts being felt throughout the Middle East, we cannot afford to be complacent to the persisting deadlock between the Israelis and Palestinians. Despite their apprehensions, understandable in part, neither the parties nor the Council can be impervious to the warning signs of a fading two-State solution. We were all sobered by last month's events in the West Bank. The window of opportunity for taking constructive action to preserve the two-State solution may now be becoming more limited. There is no alternative, sustainable and just solution to negotiated peace. We must therefore continue to make every effort to work towards the fundamental goal. We now collectively need to rediscover with the parties the determination to forge a credible political path forward. We must not let the urgency elude us.

## **VI. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR BOYCOTT OF BUSINESSES PROFITING FROM ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS.**

*The following press release was issued by the United Nations Office in Geneva on 25 October 2012 on the presentation of the report by Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, to the Third Committee of the General Assembly.*

A United Nations independent expert today called on the world body's General Assembly, as well as civil society, to take action against Israeli and international businesses that are profiting from Israeli

settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"My main recommendation is that the businesses highlighted in the report – as well as the many other businesses that are profiting

from the Israeli settlement enterprise – should be boycotted, until they bring their operations into line with international human rights and humanitarian law and standards,” the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Richard Falk, said in a news release issued as he presented a report on his work to the Assembly.

Highlighting the activities of companies such as Caterpillar Incorporated of the United States, Veolia Environment of France, G4S of the United Kingdom, the Dexia Group of Belgium, Ahava of Israel, the Volvo Group of Sweden, the Riwal Holding Group of the Netherlands, Elbit Systems of Israel, Hewlett Packard of the USA, Mehadrin of Israel, Motorola of the USA, Assa Abloy of Sweden, and Cemex of Mexico, the Special Rapporteur noted that a wide range of Israeli and international businesses are involved in the establishment and maintenance of the Israeli settlements.

“All Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been established in clear violation of international law,” said Mr. Falk.

“Yet today Israeli settlements control over 40 percent of the West Bank and between 500,000 and 600,000 Israeli citizens are living in Palestinian territory,” he added. “In the last 12 months alone, the settler population has increased by over 15,000 persons.”

He drew the Assembly’s attention to developing international law and standards concerning businesses and human rights, including the UN Global Compact and the UN Guiding Principles on Businesses and Human Rights.

“The principles outlined in the Global Compact are clear,” Mr. Falk said. “Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and

ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.”

The Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. The Guiding Principles, endorsed by the Human Rights Council, provide a global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity.

Mr. Falk also noted guidance developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross that points to the prospect of corporate and individual criminal responsibility for violations committed during a situation of armed conflict.

“In short, businesses should not breach international humanitarian law provisions. Nor should they be complicit in any breaches. If they do, they may be subject to criminal or civil liability. And this liability can be extended to individual employees of such businesses,” the Special Rapporteur said in presenting his report.

Mr. Falk noted that he had written to all the businesses mentioned in his report, and that positive responses were received from some of them.

“It is encouraging to be informed that Assa Abloy has moved its Mul-T-Locks factory from the West Bank to Israel, and that the Dexia Group, G4S, and Cemex are looking for ways to bring their operations into line with their commitments under the UN Global Compact,” he added.

Independent experts, or special rapporteurs, are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not United Nations staff, nor are they paid for their work.