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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 raises alarm over Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli prisons	1
II. United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issues statement on the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners	1
III. OHCHR expresses concern over the condition of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike and the practice of administrative detention	2
IV. United Nations Secretary-General expresses concern over the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners	2
V. Palestinian Authority Minister Shtayyeh briefs Palestinian Rights Committee on the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks	3

Contents (continued)

	<i>Page</i>
VI. Special Rapporteur issues report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967	4
VII. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process briefs Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	7
VIII. United Nations international meeting on the question of Palestine convenes in Paris	12

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I. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED SINCE 1967 RAISES ALARM OVER PALESTINIAN PRISONERS ON HUNGER STRIKE

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, made remarks on the treatment of Palestinian prisoners on 2 May 2012, excerpts of which are reproduced below:

In extraordinary acts of collective non-violent resistance to abusive conditions connected to Israel's prolonged occupation of Palestinian territory, more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners began an open-ended hunger strike on 17 April 2012, Palestinian Prisoners Day. This hunger strike is a protest against unjust arrest procedures, arbitrary detention and bad prison conditions. Prison authorities have reportedly taken punitive measures against those on hunger strike, including by denying them family and lawyer visits, confiscating their personal belongings and placing them in solitary confinement.

"I am appalled by the continuing human rights violations in Israeli prisons and I urge the Government of Israel to respect its international human rights obligations towards all Palestinian prisoners," Mr. Falk said. "Israel must treat those prisoners on hunger strike in accordance with international standards, including by allowing the detainees visits from their family members."

Mr. Falk noted that since the 1967 war, an estimated 750,000 Palestinians, including 23,000 women and 25,000 children, have gone through detention in Israeli jails. This constitutes approximately 20 percent of the total Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory or 40 percent of the total male Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"Israel's wide use of administrative detention flies in the face of international fair trial standards," Mr. Falk said. "Detainees must be able to effectively challenge administrative detention orders, including by ensuring that lawyers have full access to the evidence on which the order was issued." The Special Rapporteur noted that Israel currently holds around 300 Palestinians in administrative detention.

Mr. Falk called on the international community to ensure that Israel complies with international human rights laws and norms in its treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

II. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE ONGOING HUNGER STRIKE BY PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

The following statement on the on-going hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners was issued by Robert H. Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process on 3 May 2012.

The United Nations continues to follow with concern the many issues related to the question of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and detention centres. The Special Coordinator is deeply troubled in particular by reports about the critical condition of at least two Palestinian prisoners being held in administrative detention by the Israeli

authorities, who have been on hunger strike for more than two months. Above all, he urges all sides to find a solution before it is too late, and calls on Israel to abide by its legal obligations under international law and do everything in its power to preserve the health of the prisoners.

III. OHCHR EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER THE CONDITION OF PALESTINIAN PRISONERS ON HUNGER STRIKE AND THE PRACTICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

During a briefing at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 8 May 2012, Ravina Shamdasani of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights made the following statement in response to a question on the Palestinian hunger strikers.

OHCHR was very concerned about the situation as it understood that some prisoners were currently in a critical condition. The key issue for OHCHR was administrative detention, which it had raised time and again with Israel. Israel's use of administrative detention was a cause for concern not only to OHCHR but also to a number of Special Rapporteurs and Treaty Bodies, including the Human Rights Committee.

International law was clear: administrative detention should only be used in exceptional cases and for imperative reasons of security, and administrative detainees should have the right to challenge the lawfulness of the detention. The Human Rights Committee had clearly stated that fair trial guarantees, included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, should apply to both civilian and military tribunals.

IV. UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER THE ONGOING HUNGER STRIKE BY PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

The Office of the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued on 9 May 2012 the following note to correspondents highlighting his position on Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike.

The Secretary-General stresses the importance of averting any further deterioration in their condition.

The Secretary-General reiterates that those detained must be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees, or released without delay.

The Secretary-General urges all concerned to reach a solution without delay, and fully supports in this regard the work of his Envoy, Robert Serry, who is actively engaged on this issue with the parties on the ground.

Meanwhile, Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said he was deeply troubled by reports about the critical

condition of at least two detained Palestinian prisoners who have been on hunger strike for more than two months.

Mr. Serry urges all sides to find a solution before it is too late, and calls on Israel to abide by its legal obligations under international law and do everything in its power to preserve the health of the prisoners. More than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners began an open-ended hunger strike two weeks ago, on 17 April — Palestinian Prisoners Day — to protest against unjust arrest procedures, arbitrary detention and bad prison conditions, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>).

V. PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY MINISTER SHTAYYEH BRIEFS PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE TALKS

The Palestinian Authority Minister for Development and Reconstruction, Mr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, briefed the 342nd meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the situation on the ground and on the political process. The meeting of the Committee was convened in New York on 16 May 2012. The following press release was issued by the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat following the briefing (GA/PAL/1230):

The lack of confidence-building measures on the ground, as well as the absence of a time frame in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, were among the challenges making the possibility of a two-State solution “slimmer every day”, a key member of the Palestinian delegation to those negotiations told the Palestinian Rights Committee this afternoon.

Instead of actions intended to build confidence between the two parties, said Mohammad Shtayyeh — who is also Minister in Charge of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction — Israel was engaged in “confidence-destroying measures”, including daily arrests, the construction of “colonies” in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the siege in the Gaza Strip.

Indeed, those activities were leading to the “total erosion of the two-state solution” and increasingly dimming the prospects of such an outcome, he said as he addressed the Committee — formally known as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Israel had made evident no intentions to end occupation, he said, and had instead expanded its colonization process on the ground. That trend was a major concern, as a “one-State solution” — under which the Palestinians were currently living — was not a sustainable option.

The year 2012, unfortunately, was on track to be a “year of political vacuum”, he said. Washington was busy with elections, Europe was busy with the financial crisis, and many Arab countries were engaged with their own internal affairs. It was critical that Israel freeze and end all construction and settlement activities, in particular in East Jerusalem. Its occupation of areas such as the Jordan Valley was not truly based on security concerns but on economic benefits. Such occupation of land and resources continued unabated, and Israelis swam in modern swimming pools “even as Palestinians have no water to drink”.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had recently sent a letter to President Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, with the main message that the situation on the ground was unsustainable. “We cannot live with the status quo that Israel is trying to impose every day,” he said. The letter was a warning against the “South Africanization” of the Palestinian question. There was already a de facto apartheid system in place in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Moreover, he said, the Palestinian Authority had been created as a temporary interim measure, and its interim status should have ended long ago. Today, the Authority’s domain was extremely limited. “For how long can we continue to live with an Authority without any authority?” he asked.

President Netanyahu's reply three days ago to President Abbas' letter was not encouraging, he said. The question now was one of which course to take going forward. The application for Palestinian membership in the United Nations — submitted last September — was still in play. That move was intended to break the status quo. However, it was also necessary for the international community to change its approach, from asking Israel to end the occupation to pressuring it to do so. "It is time that the Quartet has to change direction on the way of handling this problem", or risk letting the crisis linger for years to come, he said.

He noted a recent report of the United Nations, which, echoing the view of the World Bank, indicated that Palestinian intuitions were ready for independence. The new State would continue to engage with Israel and its citizens. The aim was to have a relationship that was mutually fruitful, and not one-sided. What was essential now was for the international community to help the Palestinians conduct elections. Indeed, at a time when many were calling for democracy in the Arab world, it was a pity that many "skipped the line" when it came to Palestine.

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VI. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ISSUES REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES OCCUPIED SINCE 1967

On 25 May 2012, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, issued his report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. Excerpts of the report are reproduced below (A/HRC/20/32).

....

As with previous reports, the Special Rapporteur needs to note the continuing non-cooperation of Israel with this mandate. As earlier, the Special Rapporteur, as well as others associated with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Government of Israel to adopt a more constructive posture that accords with its treaty obligations as a State Member of the United Nations. Since the beginning of the Special Rapporteur's tenure in May of 2008, despite repeated efforts, there has not been any alteration of the refusal of Israel to cooperate with this mandate. This has made it impossible for the Special Rapporteur, in his periodic reports, to take into fuller account the official explanations of Israel for the occupation policies and practices that it adopts, especially those that are found to be

in violation of international humanitarian law or international human rights law. Despite this non-cooperation, the Special Rapporteur has made every effort to represent the positions of Israel fairly in relation to controversies associated with alleged Israeli violations of human rights relating to its occupation of Palestinian territory since 1967. The recent formal announcement by Israel of a complete refusal to cooperate with the Human Rights Council with respect to the totality of its activities underscores the difficulties confronting this mandate.

The Special Rapporteur has attempted in various ways to mitigate the impact of these limitations on his mandate arising from being excluded from the occupied Palestinian territory, and thus unable to meet with Palestinians living under occupation and communicate with Israeli officials administering the territory. Official missions

of the mandate in these years have been designed to encourage those with knowledge and experience of the conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory to meet with the Special Rapporteur in neighbouring countries. The Special Rapporteur has relied on well-documented reports and data on various aspects of the occupation from generally reliable sources to identify trends bearing on human rights issues, such as expansion of settlements, settler violence, and house demolitions.

In this regard, a mission was undertaken between 10 and 20 February 2012. The principal purpose of the mission was to assess the degree to which conditions of life for refugees residing in neighbouring countries are relevant to the realization of the rights of those subject to the occupation regime within the territory occupied in 1967. This encompasses their efforts to realize the Palestinian right of self-determination. It should be noted that the mission did not investigate whether the refugees were being treated in accordance with international law by their host Governments, as such an inquiry would exceed the geographic scope of the mandate. The Special Rapporteur, especially in the light of the denial of access to the occupied Palestinian territory, believes that it is vitally important to assess to what degree refugee rights are relevant to any negotiated peace arrangement reached between Israel and the designated representatives of the Palestinian people and to any other internationally sanctioned effort to realize Palestinian rights. The intention of the mission was to also visit the Gaza Strip, with an offer of assistance from the Government of Egypt, and also to include visits to refugee camps in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. However, regional conditions gave rise to a number of impediments: security conditions in northern Sinai made travel from Cairo to the Rafah Crossing insecure at the time of the mission,

which required the Special Rapporteur to forego the planned visit to Gaza; the civil strife in the Syrian Arab Republic made it impractical to visit Palestinian refugee camps in that embattled country; and the Government of Lebanon rejected the visit to assess the outlook on issues relevant to the mandate among Palestinian refugees in that country.

Despite these impediments, the February mission turned out to be very valuable due to the meetings that were held, and the opportunity to focus on some issues that arose during the period of the mission that had not been anticipated. The Special Rapporteur wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the friendly assistance and cooperation he received from the Palestinian Authority, the Governments of Egypt and Jordan, the Arab League, and representatives of Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that often went to considerable trouble to meet with him, sharing their information and understanding of facts and laws associated with Israeli occupation policies and practices that are relevant to protecting the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Several general conclusions emerged from meetings held in the course of the mission, especially those with members of the refugee communities, that have significant implications relating to the protection of the human rights of Palestinians living under occupation:

(a) Widespread disillusionment with the so-called “peace process” as a path to the realization of Palestinian self-determination;

(b) Equal disillusionment with the roles played by the Quartet and the United Nations, as well as with the road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with respect to the

protection of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people;

(c) Rejection of armed resistance as a tool to achieve positive progress toward realization of rights, past armed resistance having led to an intensification of hardships and suffering associated with life under Israeli occupation;

(d) Widespread support for reliance on various forms of non-violence as the most effective way to move the Palestinian struggle forward and, in this regard, significant support for civil society movements leading such initiatives, including reliance on the BDS campaign (boycott, divestment, and sanctions), pursuit of judicial remedies under universal jurisdiction in relation to alleged international crimes of Israeli political and military leaders, and efforts of humanitarian NGOs to challenge the blockade of Gaza;

(e) Short-term pessimism about the achievement of Palestinian rights due to Israeli policies, especially expansion of settlements and the purported annexation of East Jerusalem;

(f) Long-term optimism arising from regional developments, especially the Arab Spring and its demonstration of the transformative potentialities of mobilized popular resistance;

(g) The importance of including representatives of Palestinian refugee communities in all future moves to reach a sustainable resolution of the core Israel/Palestine conflict;

(h) Opposition to the “land for peace” formula that over-territorializes the conflict;

(i) Growing appreciation that the Israeli military occupation that has continued for 45 years requires a special legal regime that

takes account of long-term occupation and recognizes the humanitarian need to protect the civilian population by way of a rigorously adhered to rule of law and by the civil governance of institutions, policies and practices;

(j) Uncertainty pertaining to the future, if any, of the unresolved “statehood bid” by the Palestinian Authority formally presented to the General Assembly on 25 September 2011, followed by admission of Palestine as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

It is clear that the views of the refugee communities, while diverging in emphasis from the opinions of Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory, are influential in determining public opinion within the occupied territory, due to the widespread links of close family and community ties. The acceptance or rejection of alternate political approaches or outcomes by Palestinian refugees living outside of the occupied Palestinian territory is one of the key determinants as to whether Palestinians inside the occupied territory are likely to accept or reject a negotiated outcome.

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VIII. Recommendations

The Special Rapporteur recommends that:

(a) In the light of widespread abusive administrative detention procedures and practices, a resolution of censure be adopted by the Human Rights Council, and a special body be tasked with preparing a detailed study of the application of administrative detention as applied by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory;

(b) In view of the persistence of occupation for nearly half a century, with no end in sight, the Human Rights Council should commission a study of the adequacy of international humanitarian law to cover the situations caused by prolonged occupation and provide Israel and the international community with appropriate recommendations;

(c) Support be given for a request to the International Court of Justice for an Advisory Opinion on the Israeli practice of transferring detained Palestinians to prisons in Israel, denying normal visitation rights, possibly joined to a broader request for legal clarification of the special character of prolonged belligerent occupation;

(d) The Human Rights Council take emergency notice of an Israeli legislative initiative that purports to legalize settlement “outposts”, currently unlawful under Israeli law, which would both further increase Israeli settlement land claims and correspondingly undermine Palestinian rights, including with respect to Palestinian self-determination;

(e) The Human Rights Council should give increased attention to the refusal by Israel to cooperate with the normal functioning of the United Nations by way of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

VII. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 25 May 2012, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Robert Serry briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Excerpts of the briefing are reproduced below (S/PV.6775).

...

The past month has been characterized by several challenging events that have the potential to destabilize the situation on the ground. Yet each has been overcome for now, and we are possibly moving in a more positive direction.

Following the Quartet meeting of 11 April, the parties exchanged letters in which they outlined their respective requirements for direct talks to continue. The Palestinians delivered a letter on 17 April and the Israelis responded on 12 May. The exchange was kept confidential and led to quiet direct engagement, with limited international involvement, which should be welcomed and encouraged. The Quartet envoys will

further engage with both sides to encourage them to seize this opportunity to take mutually reinforcing confidence-building measures that support a continuation of their quiet engagement.

In parallel, however, a series of developments threatened to inflame tensions. The hunger strike by more than 1,500 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody, which started on 17 April to protest prisoner conditions and the application of administrative detentions, was resolved on 14 May. We are pleased that Israel has taken steps to address the concerns of prisoners related to the use of solitary confinement, family visits and the practice of administrative detention, which should be used only in the most limited number of

cases and for as short a period as possible. We understand that Israel is also to deliver the remains of 100 Palestinians buried in Israeli-controlled areas.

The agreement reflects the positive impact of the quiet direct engagement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The Secretary-General and I have been engaged from the beginning and indicated our concern for the health of the prisoners. We welcome the foresight of both parties that enabled them to reach the agreement, which we hope will continue to be implemented in full. We also commend the important role played by Egypt in brokering the deal. However, we are still concerned by reports about a few prisoners continuing their hunger strike, one of them in critical condition, and hope for a speedy resolution of those cases as well.

The prisoner agreement was reached on the eve of 15 May, the day the Palestinians commemorate as the beginning of the refugee experience, which last year resulted in considerable violence and loss of life. Instead, the events of the day were relatively contained, with Palestinian and Israeli security forces heavily deployed to prevent confrontation. The Lebanese Armed Forces were also prepared to prevent demonstrations from approaching the Blue Line. Clashes did occur, however, between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces, resulting in injuries, mostly at checkpoints around Jerusalem.

Some clashes and arrests also took place in East Jerusalem on 20 May, on what the Israeli Government regards as Jerusalem Day, marking what Israel considers to be the unification of occupied East Jerusalem. Israeli police arrested 10 Israeli demonstrators, as well as five Palestinians. A Palestinian man was also seriously injured after allegedly attempting to stab an Israeli

soldier near the Gush Etzion junction, south of Bethlehem. On 15 and 20 May, the two sides acted in a way that averted an escalation of tensions.

Simultaneously, significant internal political changes occurred. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Netanyahu struck a deal with the opposition Kadima Party to join his coalition Government on 8 May. The new governing coalition now includes 94 of the 120 members of the Knesset. Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated that the new coalition allows him to promote a “responsible peace process.” The Secretary-General sees this as a new opportunity for the Government of Israel to embark on a meaningful renewal of the peace process with vision and determination and in the aim of resolving all final status issues and realizing the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, resulting in the long overdue establishment of the Palestinian State.

On the Palestinian side, President Abbas reshuffled the Cabinet and on 16 May swore in Prime Minister Fayyad and 24 ministers. He immediately tasked them with implementing his decree calling for long overdue municipal elections. The Presidential decree establishing the Government, as well as the Prime Minister’s letter of acceptance, made clear that the new Cabinet did not prejudge the outcome of ongoing efforts at Palestinian reconciliation.

Four days later, on 20 May, Palestinian leaders announced a new formula for progress on reconciliation achieved with the assistance of Egyptian mediation. As part of the agreement and as we speak, the Palestinian Central Election Commission is in Gaza to ascertain whether it will be enabled to update the voter registration lists in Gaza, which is expected to take six to eight weeks. On 28 May, the head of the

Election Commission met with senior Hamas leaders in Gaza and announced that the Committee will resume its operations in three days. We expect the de facto authorities to extend their full cooperation to enable voter registration in Gaza. We understand that a 10-day period is expected to start simultaneously for the formation of a new transitional technocratic Government for the duration of six months. A transitional Government, once established, will then prepare for general elections and focus on the reconstruction of Gaza.

Progress on reconciliation remains a fundamental aspect of peace, as a unified Palestinian polity is central to realizing a two-State solution. On 11 April, while reaffirming its previous positions, the Quartet also underscored that the situation in and around Gaza would remain fragile and unsustainable as long as the West Bank and Gaza are not reunited under the legitimate Palestinian Authority adhering to the commitments undertaken by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Bearing in mind resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), the Secretary-General has continually supported efforts for Palestinian unity and the work of Egypt in this regard. The Secretary-General wishes to see unity in the framework of the positions of the Quartet and the commitments of the PLO and the Arab Peace Initiative. As he reiterated in his phone call with President Abbas after the Doha Declaration was adopted in February, peace talks and reconciliation are not mutually exclusive. Progress in one must not undermine the other.

During the reporting period, settlement activity continued. On 24 April, the Government of Israel announced the intention to retroactively legalize three settlement outposts in the West Bank towns

of Sansana, Bruchin and Rechalim. On 30 April, Jerusalem City Hall submitted plans to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee for an additional 1,200 hotel rooms in Givat Hamatos in East Jerusalem. On 10 May, plans for the construction of 1,242 units in the Gilo neighbourhood of East Jerusalem were announced, extending Gilo into surrounding Palestinian areas. These actions are contrary to international law and Israel's commitments under the Road Map, and should stop. Demolitions also continued during the reporting period, albeit at a slower rate.

Clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians have also continued in the West Bank. Settler attacks resulted in 11 Palestinians, including four children, being injured. On 19 and 26 May, two Palestinians from different villages were reportedly injured by live fire from inhabitants of Yitzhar settlement, south of Nablus. Settler attacks on Palestinian property, including agricultural land, resulted in over 1,300 trees being damaged. Palestinian attacks on Israelis in the West Bank, mostly consisting of stone throwing at Israeli vehicles, also continued during the reporting period and resulted in one Israeli injury. On 20 May, Israeli security forces announced the arrest of Palestinians attempting to kidnap Israelis in the West Bank in order to negotiate the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

During the reporting period, citing security concerns, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted 306 operations in the West Bank, during which 725 Palestinians were injured, including 44 children, while 284 Palestinians were arrested. Nine IDF soldiers were injured by Palestinians. The bulk of injuries and detentions occurred during daily Palestinian demonstrations in support of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails until the prisoner

agreement was reached on 14 May. On 20 May, an Israeli military court convicted Bassem Tamimi on charges of taking part in illegal demonstrations and soliciting protesters to throw stones. These charges related to demonstrations against the barrier, which deviates from the Green Line in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. I take this opportunity to reiterate that the right of peaceful protest must be upheld and that all protests should be kept strictly non-violent.

Palestinian security forces continued work to maintain law and order in the West Bank within the framework of Palestinian Authority obligations under the first phase of the Road Map. On 27 April, Palestinian security forces safely dismantled two unexploded devices near Jenin. On 5 and 6 May, Palestinian forces conducted a large security operation in Jenin to restore order, and arrested some 60 suspects following shots fired against the residence of the Governor on 2 May and his death from a heart attack the next day. To carry out their important mission in an effective manner, Palestinian security forces must be adequately equipped, including by maintaining an appropriate type and amount of weapons and ammunition under their control.

Further to our expressed concern regarding transparent enforcement of the law, on 29 April the Palestinian Attorney General confirmed that, for several months and upon his instruction, the main Palestinian Internet providers prevented clients from accessing some Palestinian news websites. On 5 May, President Abbas formally reversed this order and gave public assurances that freedom of opinion and expression are natural rights enshrined in the Palestinian Basic Law.

In Gaza, a relative calm prevailed during the reporting period. A total of 11 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel, while Israel Defense Forces conducted seven incursions and two airstrikes into Gaza, resulting in the injury of 10 Palestinian civilians. Six Palestinians were killed and six were injured in tunnel-related activities. We condemn indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and continue to call for their complete cessation. We also urge Israel to show maximum restraint.

On 13 May, a Gaza court rejected an appeal against the death penalty for a Palestinian convicted of murder in April 2011, bringing the number of death sentences confirmed in Gaza this year to five. The sentence has not been approved by President Abbas, as required by the Palestinian Basic Law. We call on Hamas to reconsider its position, exhibit respect for the international community's firm rejection of the death penalty, and abolish its use in Gaza.

Reconstruction and economic growth in the Gaza Strip remain fundamental objectives of the United Nations. The total value of approved United Nations works in the Gaza Strip involving potential dual-use materials that require Israel's approval now exceeds \$365 million, with \$96 million-worth of projects still under Israeli review. This means that United Nations agencies are now enabled to play a major role in international efforts for priority recovery and reconstruction in Gaza.

Much more needs to be done, however. The United Nations continues to urge Israel to allow the unrestricted import of key building materials and particularly aggregate, iron bar and cement — the "ABC" of Gaza reconstruction — which are now also substantially and illegally imported through tunnels with Egypt. In the absence

of such a change, it will be important to maintain a flow of approvals for further reconstruction works in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza's recovery and long-term economic growth remain a fundamental objective of the United Nations. Transfers to the West Bank and exports to Israel are essential in this regard. The recent export of a truckload of shirts to the United Kingdom represents an important broadening of the type of goods being exported from the Gaza Strip. As of 19 May, a total of 150 truckloads of goods have been exported from the Gaza Strip this year. This is a positive step, and I hope that exports from Gaza will continue to grow.

Gaza continues to suffer from a shortage of electricity. While the situation has improved slightly since the last briefing (see S/PV.6742), further improvements are required to ensure that the energy supply is both sufficient and reliable. The United Nations remains engaged on this issue, including through the replacement of four destroyed transformers, a measure that will enhance the ability of the Gaza power plant to feed the electricity grid.

...

In conclusion, in this briefing I have drawn the attention of the Council to a few positive trends that, if sustained, will offer renewed hope for progress. On the ground, the situation could have worsened, and the parties' concerted efforts to avert this are encouraging. The quiet, direct engagement within the framework of the exchange of letters is positive as well. The outcome of recent reconciliation efforts, on which I have reported, is still uncertain, but in the end there can be no two-State solution without

Palestinian unity being restored consistent with that goal. The parties must now also be willing to take the much-needed steps to capitalize on the potential for progress. This is important, because while the potential for progress exists, the situation remains fragile and uncertain.

From my vantage point in Jerusalem, where I closely follow events on the ground and in the region, I disagree with those who argue that the significant change and uncertainty in the region brought about by the Arab awakening means that this is not the time for progress. On the contrary, the search for a lasting peace that ends the Arab-Israeli conflict and resolves all claims is, in my view, more urgent than ever, because after almost 20 years of failed peacemaking the very viability of a two-State solution is at stake. If the parties do not grasp the current opportunity, they should realize that the implication is not merely the slowing of progress towards a two-State solution. Instead, we could be moving down a path towards a one-State reality, which would also move us further away from regional peace in the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative.

I sincerely hope that the parties will find a way forward in the coming months, and I pledge the continued commitment of the United Nations to work for a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions; the Madrid principles, including land for peace; the road map; and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

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VIII. UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE CONVENES IN PARIS

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine in Paris on 30 and 31 May 2012, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 65/13 and 65/14 of 30 November 2010. Under the theme “The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine”, the meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session, during which presentations were made by 14 experts. (Please refer to the Chair’s summary for further information on the meeting). Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent a video message to the meeting, excerpts of which are reproduced below:

...

Women and young people largely drove the events of the Arab Spring. They rose up against human rights abuses and oppression. They spoke out for equality and justice, dignity and decent work. They tapped the power of social networks for social good. And they showed the potential of young people to make history and transform their societies for the better.

Yet, we know that Palestinian women and youth continue to face exclusion, unemployment and poverty. The occupation makes access to education, jobs and health care more difficult. Internal divisions only make the problem worse.

Palestinian women and youth have a right to fulfil their aspirations without barriers and without discrimination. They

...

have a right to have their voices heard in decision-making. The United Nations works day in and day out to promote economic and political empowerment throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Women and youth have much to contribute to secure a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. A two-State solution is long overdue. The status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable. I encourage Palestinian and Israeli youth to build a future of peace. I urge greater involvement of women in the peace process.

The United Nations will continue to support Palestinian women and youth. We cannot just make speeches about them. We must listen to them. We must work with them. That is what this meeting is about. You have my full support.