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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip compose the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), occupied by Israel. Since 1967, Israel has de jure annexed Jerusalem and entrenched its settlement enterprise in Area C, leading to its de facto annexation. Israel has instituted an array of policies and practices which serve to prioritize Israeli Jewish self-determination and settlement in both Israel and the OPT, recently affirming these “values” in the 2018 Israeli Nation-State Law. Rather than protect the Palestinian population, Israel has successfully implemented the diametrically opposite intent of UN Sustainable Development Goal 16, on promoting inclusive societies for sustainable development.

In its administration of the OPT, Israel has imposed conditions on Palestinians that make sustainable development impossible. This reality, affirmed by international agencies and experts ranging from the UN Conference on Trade and Development to the World Bank, is most evident in Jerusalem.

Israel’s stated aim of creating a 70:30 demographic majority of Israeli Jews to Palestinians, is marginalizing Palestinians in annexed East Jerusalem. Accordingly, Israel imposes layer after layer of discriminatory and targeted policies and practices aiming to directly or indirectly transfer the Palestinian population from the city. As a result, sustainable development is only possible for Israeli Jews, while Palestinian presence is continually under threat.

This is highlighted by a variety of indicators, including:

- Over 70% of Palestinians in Jerusalem live below the poverty line. (Goal 1)
- There is a shortage of nearly 2,000 classrooms in East Jerusalem for Palestinian students. (Goal 4)
- Due to Israel’s discriminatory permit and planning regime, one third of all homes are at risk of demolition and only 13% of land is zoned for Palestinian construction in East Jerusalem. (Goals 9 and 11)
- Israeli restrictions limit Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem access to water. Only 59% of Palestinians are connected to the water grid there, and the World Health Organization previously found that Palestinians in the city “consume only half of the amount defined ... as satisfying the basic right to water.” (Goals 6 and 9)
- According to the International Labor Organization, Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have the highest unemployment rate in the world. (Goal 8)

While these conditions are not new, the likelihood of continued deteriorating conditions is at an all-time high. This is primarily due to the inaction of third States and unlawful measures taken by some third States, for example, the United States and Australia moving their embassies to Jerusalem. In addition to international organizations normalizing the annexation, such as participation of the UN World Tourism Organization in an Israeli tourism conference in Jerusalem in 2018.

All States must assess how their policies not only impact the sustainable development of their own peoples, but also that of others. The international community can no longer recite their commitment to the SDGs, but stand idly by while occupied, protected populations are wholly excluded from them.