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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the
rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-eighth year

Identical letters dated 26 December 2023 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

It has been 11 days since my last letter, 11 days of endless demands for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, endless calls for action to stop the Israeli killing machine, endless appeals to stem the loss and trauma and bloodletting, endless pleas for help and protection for the Palestinian people as they continue to be wantonly targeted for death and mass deportation by Israel, the occupying Power.

It has been 14 days since the General Assembly, taking note of the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and the warnings of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) of an unmitigated humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, adopted resolution [ES-10/22](#), unequivocally demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire" and that "all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians".

And it has been four days since the Security Council adopted resolution [2720 \(2023\)](#), whereby it, inter alia, reiterated "its demand that all parties to the conflict comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, including with regard to the conduct of hostilities and the protection of civilians and civilian objects, humanitarian access, and the protection of humanitarian personnel and their freedom of movement, and the duty, as applicable, of ensuring the food and medical supplies, among others, of the population" and affirmed "that nothing in this resolution absolves the parties of these obligations"; demanded "the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip" and that "the parties to the conflict allow and facilitate the use of all available routes to and throughout the entire Gaza Strip, including border crossings"; called for "all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law" and deplored "all attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as all violence and hostilities against civilians, and all acts of terrorism"; reaffirmed "that civilian



objects, including places of refuge, including within United Nations facilities and their surroundings, are protected under international humanitarian law” and rejected the “forced displacement of the civilian population, including children”; and recalled that “humanitarian relief personnel must be respected and protected”.

But all of this has been to no avail as Israel, the occupying Power, presses on with its genocidal war on Palestinians. Snubbing the Security Council, the General Assembly and the international community at large, Israel remains intransigent, deepening this horrific catastrophe and proving with every word and deed that it is a settler-colonial occupier, an apartheid regime and a terror State.

It proves this every day, behaving as an entitled, rogue State, its political and military leaders believing and insisting that they are above the law. Its Prime Minister vows to continue his criminal, depraved war on the defenceless civilian population under Israel’s subjugation and siege; its President signs his name on missiles that will be sent to kill Palestinian children, women and men; its Foreign Minister ridicules the United Nations and anyone who calls for respect for international law; its military commanders order the dropping of 2,000-pound bombs on civilian homes, massacring Palestinians by the hundreds and opening fire on any human suspected of being a Palestinian; its politicians boast about the devastation and destruction caused to the Palestinian people and their intent to continue targeting, besieging, occupying, colonizing, killing, maiming, destroying and ethnically cleansing Palestinians.

This is Israel – the same Israel that some countries continue making excuses for, justifying its blatant breaches of international law; the same Israel that some countries continue shielding from accountability for its war crimes and crimes against humanity; the same Israel that some countries continue supporting politically, militarily, financially and legally, even as it commits genocide, deepening their complicity in and responsibility for this historic and grave injustice.

Israel is making a mockery of the United Nations and specifically the Security Council, the world’s political security body, with zero regard for the countries on the Council or the Charter and laws they are mandated to uphold. It does so without hesitation, confident that it will continue to get away with murder and every other crime perpetrated against the Palestinian people, just as it has for decades.

In the four days since the Security Council adopted resolution [2720 \(2023\)](#), Israel has not only continued its violations but has escalated them, openly rejecting the resolution and the Council’s very authority with its defiance and pledges to commit more crimes. It does so brazenly because it continues to be shielded politically and diplomatically and to evade accountability and the sanctions and consequences that would surely follow were it any other State committing these crimes.

Such impunity has only led to more loss of human life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Upon the direct orders of Israeli political and military leaders, including the Prime Minister himself, who has gone to Gaza to rally soldiers, Israeli occupying forces continue to perpetrate the mass murder of Palestinians. These murders are being carried out through military air strikes, bombardments and shooting attacks, including direct executions of Palestinian civilians and defiling of corpses, across refugee camps, residential neighbourhoods and UNRWA schools and other United Nations facilities where the nearly 2 million Palestinians internally displaced in Gaza are sheltering.

In these past four days alone, the Israeli occupying forces have killed hundreds of Palestinian children, women and men. This has included at least 50 strikes between 24 and 25 December, as Christians in Palestine and around the world gathered for Christmas, killing 130 people, including entire families, in Bureij, Nuseirat and

Maghazi refugee camps, along with assaults on other parts of Gaza that have killed a total of 250 Palestinians in just 24 hours.

In the past 80 days, since Israel began this criminal aggression, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli military forces or settler militias in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has surpassed 21,000 people. In Gaza alone, Israel has killed over 20,674 Palestinians, including more than 8,200 children and 6,200 women, along with thousands of men, young and old, as well as hundreds of doctors and medics, at least 135 United Nations personnel and 62 journalists, and has wounded more than 54,536 people. In the West Bank, Israel has killed at least 303 Palestinians, including 76 children, and has wounded more than 3,450 people.

This has been accompanied by mass destruction and mass displacement. Although over 85 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza have already been forcibly displaced, some many times over, Israel continues to demand their “evacuation” from areas in central and southern Gaza where they had fled for safety from the Israeli onslaught. Over the Christmas holiday, Israel demanded the “evacuation” once again of more than 150,000 Palestinians, mainly in the central area of Gaza, to areas in the south, where it also continues to carry out military attacks. We reiterate that nowhere in Gaza is safe.

The destruction caused by Israel has dramatically reduced housing and safe shelters in Gaza. It is estimated that Israel has destroyed more than two thirds of civilian structures in northern Gaza and more than one fourth of civilian structures in the south, exacerbating the homelessness, destitution and vulnerability of nearly the entire population.

A United States military historian, Robert Pape, has recently been quoted as stating: “Gaza is one of the most intense civilian punishment campaigns in history” and, comparing the extent of destruction to that wrought in the Second World War, stated that it now ranks “in the top quartile of the most devastating campaigns ever”.

Moreover, in this regard, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context has alarmingly stressed: “What has happened in Gaza is the result of what I call ‘institutionalized impunity’. Impunity for occupation. For a war of extermination. Genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. If the ICC does not act very soon, we need a special tribunal for Gaza and action by States.”

And still, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his coalition of government and military officials continue to press for more killing, more destruction and more ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Netanyahu is specifically aiming to depopulate Gaza of Palestinian civilians, including by forced displacement and forced migration, which he cynically refers to as “voluntary migration”, decrying the delay he is encountering in finding countries to accept his rogue plans and reportedly stating, “our problem is the countries that are willing to absorb (them), and we are working on it”.

We condemn all such illegal Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinian people. We condemn the killing, wounding, maiming, displacement and deprivation of our people, including by continued obstruction of humanitarian assistance, using starvation as a weapon of war by denying access to food and water for the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, as well as by the deliberate denial of medical care and denial of access to proper water, sanitation and hygiene services that have led to the rapid spread of illness and epidemic diseases among the population, causing untold suffering and trauma.

Faced with this abhorrent, inhumane and manifestly illegal situation, the Palestinian leadership reiterates its standing demands for an immediate ceasefire, for urgent, unimpeded and sufficient humanitarian aid to ensure the welfare of our people

and for a halt to all Israeli attempts to forcibly transfer or deport Palestinian civilians from any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the Gaza Strip, and all Israeli measures to colonize our land. Moreover, we reiterate the call for immediate protection of the Palestinian people.

The international community cannot stand idly by while Israel continues to destroy Palestinian lives and to obliterate Gaza. There must be consequences for these crimes; there must be accountability. There must be action to protect the vulnerable in Palestine; it cannot remain the exception to protections and rights accorded by international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, to all peoples on this Earth.

Immediate, urgent efforts must be made to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolutions [2712 \(2023\)](#) and [2720 \(2023\)](#) and General Assembly resolutions [ES-10/21](#) and [ES-10/22](#). Neither the Council nor the Assembly should remain silent in the face of such impunity. Only serious, collective efforts, including an arms embargo and sanctions for as long as Israel continues to flout the Charter and global demands to cease and desist, will create the pressure necessary to bring a halt to its war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Palestinian people.

I close by highlighting the call by Pope Francis in his Christmas address as he lamented the grave crisis in Gaza: “I plead for an end to the military operations with their appalling harvest of innocent civilian victims, and call for a solution to the desperate humanitarian situation by an opening to the provision of humanitarian aid”. This is a matter of life and death; we appeal to the international community to act now, with urgency, with conscience, with principle and with humanity.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 820 letters on the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 ([A/55/432-S/2000/921](#)) to 11 December 2023 ([A/ES-10/976-S/2023/993](#)), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations against our people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Riyad **Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer