



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

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

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I. COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONCLUDES REVIEW OF ISRAEL'S REPORT, ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS

On 3 October, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concluded the review of the fourth periodic report of Israel on measures taken to implement the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([E/C.12/ISR/4](#)). The concluding observations of the Committee ([E/C.12/ISR/CO/4](#)) are excerpted below:

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Applicability of the Covenant

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7. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations that the State party incorporate the rights of the Covenant in its domestic legal order. It also recommends that the State party enhance judicial training on the nature and scope of the State party's obligation under the Covenant as well as on the justiciability of the Covenant. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No.9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.

Application of the Covenant to the occupied territories

...

9. The Committee reminds the State party that the applicability of its human rights obligations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as well as the concurrent application of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in a situation of armed conflict or occupation have been affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (paras. 106, 112). This is also the view consistently adopted by various human rights treaty bodies, including this Committee, and expressed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee urges the State party to comply with its obligations under the Covenant in line with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. It also reiterates its previous recommendation that the State party include information on the situation of the Covenant rights enjoyed by the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in its fifth periodic report.

State party's policies relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory

...

11. The Committee reminds the State party that it has positive and negative obligations with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, depending on its level of control and the transfer of authority, that it should not raise any obstacle to the exercise of such rights in those fields where competence has been transferred to the Palestinian authorities, and that any measures taken by the State party should ensure that the legislative and policy measures

relating to the occupied territories, taken by the State party as the occupying power do not result in any permanent alteration in the political or legal status of the territories or have irreparable consequences for the people living there. The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Immediately lift the blockade and closures on the Gaza Strip and provide unrestricted access for the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance;

(b) Reduce restrictions on nominated items on the dual use list to minimum levels strictly required by security imperatives;

(c) Take immediate steps to facilitate the free movement of Palestinians within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and ensure that any measures restricting the free movement of civilians and goods from, into and within the Gaza Strip are in line with its obligations under the Covenant;

(d) Immediately halt and reverse all settlement policies and developments in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Occupied Syrian Golan, and rescind the delegated powers granted to organizations facilitating settlement such as the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish National Fund, and discontinue support to these organizations.

National human rights institutions

...

13. The Committee recommends that the State party take concrete steps to establish an independent national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles, including through strengthening the independence of the existing institution(s).

Free disposal of natural wealth and resources

...

15. The Committee recommends that the State party immediately cease to issue licences for exploiting natural resources in the occupied territories, and regulate the operations and activities of Israeli and multinational companies operating in the occupied territories in order to ensure their compliance with human rights standards. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities.

The Basic Law: Israel – The Nation State of the Jewish People

...

17. The Committee urges the State party to review the Basic Law with a view to bringing it in line with the Covenant or repealing it and to step up its efforts to eliminate discrimination faced by non-Jews in enjoying the Covenant rights, particularly rights of self-determination, non-discrimination and cultural rights.

Non-discrimination

...

19. The Committee recommends that the State party revise the existing anti-discrimination legislation or adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation with a view to ensuring that legislation prohibits all direct, indirect and multiple forms of discrimination on all grounds, including language, colour, social origin, property, sexual orientation, birth or other status, and providing for effective remedies for victims of discrimination. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 20 (2009).

The Bedouin people

...

21. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Step up its efforts to resolve the pending land ownership claims in a timely, transparent and effective manner;

(b) Consult with the affected Bedouin communities on the implementation of Government resolution No. 2397 and ensure that any policy affecting the Bedouin people is formulated and implemented through meaningful consultation with and participation of the affected Bedouin communities;

(c) Immediately stop evictions of Bedouin people living in unrecognized villages from their homes and ancestral lands and regularize their villages;

(d) Improve living conditions and infrastructure in all Bedouin residential localities in the Negev area.

Right to work

...

25. The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to increase the labour market participation of persons with disabilities, Bedouins, Arab women and ultra-Orthodox Jewish men, including through providing vocational education and training tailored to their experience and level of job skills and fully implementing the quota for the employment of persons with disabilities. It also recommends that the State party provide comprehensive and disaggregated data on the realization of the right to work, including labour market participation, employment, unemployment and underemployment in its fifth periodic report.

...

Trade union rights

...

33. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that complaint mechanisms are put in place for workers in the Occupied Syrian Golan and take the measures necessary to raise awareness of workers of their rights under the Covenant and the complaint mechanisms available to them, including in cooperation with trade unions.

...

Personal status laws

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39. The Committee recommends that the State party assess the current system of religious law governing marriage and divorce with a view to harmonising this system with the provisions of the Covenant, particularly non-discrimination in the enjoyment of Covenant rights (art 2(2)) and the equal enjoyment by men and women of the economic, social and cultural rights in the Covenant (art 3).

Family reunification

...

41. The Committee recommends that the State party review the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order) with a view to bringing the Law into line with its obligations under article 10 of the Covenant and facilitating family reunification of all citizens and permanent residents irrespective of their status or background.

...

Poverty and food insecurity in the Gaza Strip

...

45. The Committee refers the State party to paras 11(a) and (b). It also recommends that the State party commission a scientific assessment regarding on the impact of herbicide spraying on the Palestinians in the affected areas, particularly relating to their livelihood, health, food security and environment and respond appropriately to the relevant findings; in the interim it is recommended that the State party cease the spraying on the basis of the precautionary principle. It further recommends that the State party ensure that farmers and fishers have free access to their land and irrigation facilities, and to marine sources and refrain from confiscating and damaging boats and fishing equipment and restricting the movement of Palestinian fishers and fishing communities.

Water and sanitation

...

47. The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to:

(a) Ensure that all the Bedouin villages, recognized or unrecognized, are connected to the national water network and to a sewage disposal infrastructure;

(b) Cease the destruction of Palestinian water infrastructure and take all measures necessary to ensure that Palestinians have access to sufficient, safe and clean drinking water.

...

Planning and zoning in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

...

51. The Committee recommends that the State party review planning laws and policies in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to ensure that they are compliant with its obligations under the Covenant and end zoning practices. The Committee also recommends that the State party reform the construction permit system in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with a view to preventing demolitions and forced evictions for a lack of a construction permit; and ensure that any demolition is carried out only as a last resort, and is strictly necessary as required by a legitimate state purpose in accordance with its obligations under the Covenant. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.

The practice of punitive demolitions

...

53. The Committee urges the State party to immediately cease the practice of collective punitive demolition of houses and private property and ensure that victims of such practice are provided with full and effective reparations, including restitution of the affected properties.

Right to health

...

55. The Committee recommends that the State party increase the budgetary allocation to the public healthcare sector and intensify its efforts to ensure equal access to quality healthcare services, regardless of place of residence, particularly those living in peripheral areas. It also recommends that the State party take concrete measures to address the disproportionately poor health status of the Arab and the Bedouin populations.

Access to healthcare services

...

57. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take the measures necessary to ensure that migrant workers and asylum seekers have equal access to preventive, curative and palliative healthcare services, regardless of their legal status and documentation, including by extending the coverage of national health insurance to them;

(b) Ensure that all children, regardless of their legal status, have access to healthcare services at all times;

(c) Expand the healthcare services, including mental health care, provided by state-funded clinics to asylum seekers and enhance their accessibility, including through providing additional financial resources.

...

59. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Facilitate the entry of essential medical equipment and supplies and the movement of medical professionals from and to Gaza;

(b) Review the medical exit permit system with a view to facilitating timely access to all medically recommended health care services by residents of Gaza;

(c) Ensure that all children referred for medical treatment outside Gaza can be accompanied by at least one of their parents.

...

Right to education

...

63. The Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to:

(a) Increase the public funding allocated to the education sector;

(b) Identify the root causes for the high dropouts of Bedouin students and take the effective measures to address them;

(c) Improve the quality of education provided to Arab students with a view to enhancing their academic achievement;

(d) Address the shortage of classrooms and kindergartens in Bedouin neighbourhoods;

(e) Increase the number of public kindergartens and regulate and closely monitor the quality and educational environment of private kindergartens;

(f) Expand the provision of inclusive education for students with disabilities to attend mainstream schools;

Access to education

...

65. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Rescind demolition and stop-work orders against schools;

(b) Limit Israeli security forces from entering school facilities and carrying out searches to the extent strictly required by the exigencies to ensure a safe and protected learning environment for Palestinian students;

(c) Take effective measures to ensure the unhindered and safe access of students and teachers to schools without harassment or threats; and investigate, prosecute and punish acts of harassment and intimidation by Israeli settlers and security forces;

(d) Endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, and take concrete measures to deter the military use of schools, including by bringing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict into domestic military policy and operational frameworks.

Access to higher education

...

67. The Committee urges the State party to lift the blanket ban on students from the Gaza Strip to access education in the West Bank and to allow the entry of materials and equipment necessary for science and engineering education to Gaza.

Cultural rights

...

69. The Committee recommends that the State party take the measures to promote diverse cultures, including through raising awareness of various cultures of the Arab population, the Bedouin people, migrant workers and asylum seekers. It also recommends that the State party reinstate the Arab language as an official language and promote the use of the Arab language, including through strengthening the High Institute for the Arabic Language, inter alia by increasing financial resources allocated to it.

Protection of and access to historical and religious sites

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71. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory exercise their right to take part in cultural and religious life without restrictions other than those that are strictly proportionate to security considerations and are not discriminatory in their application in accordance with Article 15(1)(a), as interpreted in the Committee's general comment No. 21 (2009) on the Right of everyone to take part in cultural life.

...

73. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations, information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (c) and (d) (policies relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory), 17 (the Basic Law: Israel – The Nation State of the Jewish People) and 23 (refugees and asylum seekers) above.

74. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fifth periodic report, to be prepared in accordance with the reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee in 2008 (E/C.12/2008/2), by 31 October 2024. In addition, it invites the State party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).

II. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN THE GAZA STRIP

On 10 October, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Jamie McGoldrick issued a [statement](#), as below:

As we head towards another Friday of demonstrations at the Israeli fence surrounding the Gaza Strip, I am deeply concerned about the impact that the violence at these demonstrations has on children. Since 30 March 2018, 40 Palestinian children have been killed and 1,521 injured with live ammunition by Israeli security forces. I again call on the Israeli authorities to refrain from using excessive force, including the use of live ammunition, in response to the demonstrations and remind them of their responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

I am concerned that the demonstrations' organizers have branded tomorrow's protests as "Our Child Martyrs," which may push boys and girls to put themselves at risk. When this branding was used on 27 July 2018, two boys who participated in the demonstrations were killed by Israeli forces. I call upon Hamas to uphold its responsibility to ensure the safety of children in Gaza, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence, or from being used as instruments of political action.

I reiterate in the strongest terms that children must never be the target of violence, nor should they be put at risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence.

III. EU, UN-HABITAT PARTNER ON A \$US 4.4 MILLION PLANNING AND LAND RIGHTS PROJECT IN PALESTINE

On 14 October, UN-Habitat issued a [press release](#) , as below:

UN-Habitat and the European Union recently launched two new projects in Palestine under the rubric: Achieving Planning and Land Rights in Area C, West Bank, with a total budget of USD 4.4 million.

Area C represents 60 percent of the land in the West Bank and is home to more than 300,000 Palestinians; it contains valuable natural and historical resources. The expected results are to improve resilience and tenure security of Palestinian communities through spatial economic planning and mapping of land rights; and strengthened capacity of Palestinian institutions to perform land-based functions and delivery of essential services in the West Bank territory.

The first project is a continuation of spatial planning support to Palestinian communities, and it includes policy support in terms of the preparation of a nation-wide Urban Policy for the State

of Palestine, including Gaza Strip, occupied East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. These interventions are designed and will be implemented with Palestine Ministry of Local Government over a period of 24 months.

The second project will be delivered in partnership with the Land and Water Settlement Commission and technical support will be provided by the Global Land Tool Network. The project includes the finalization of land registration processes in the West Bank territory and building a fit-for-purpose land information system, all in all over a period of 48 months.

Achieving planning and rights is a priority agreed in the Habitat Country Programme Document (2018-2022) and ultimately would contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular, SDG 11 and SDG 16) and the New Urban Agenda that were adopted by State of Palestine in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

IV. EU ISSUES PERIODIC REPORT ON DEMOLITIONS AND SEIZURES IN THE WEST BANK

On 14 October, the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) issued its six-month report on “Demolitions and Seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem” (Reporting Period: 1 January – 30 June 2019). Below is the summary of the [report](#):

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued during the reporting period.¹ 296 Palestinian owned structures were demolished or seized, and 434 people (including 207 children) were displaced. These numbers mark increases of around 50 per cent and 150 per cent, respectively, compared with the equivalent period in 2018. Over 80 per cent of these structures were residential and livelihood structures. In addition, the demolitions and seizures in the reporting period adversely affected 39 738 Palestinians (including 17 353 children). 36 structures, constituting humanitarian assets, targeted in the reporting period were funded by the EU or EU Member States, which indicates an increase of around 38.5 per cent compared with the equivalent period in 2018. The total value of these structures, demolished or seized by Israeli authorities, was EUR 89 219, which represents an increase of around 46 per cent compared with the equivalent period in 2018. Other concerning developments that negatively impact the lives of Palestinians involve Israeli actions targeting educational facilities, destruction of water infrastructure, punitive demolitions, home demolitions in East Jerusalem, and displacement related to Israeli military exercises.

The restrictive planning and zoning regimes applied by Israeli authorities in parts of the West Bank (Area C and East Jerusalem), impede the development of adequate housing, infrastructure and livelihoods for Palestinians. Today, less than 1 per cent of Area C, and about 13 per cent of East Jerusalem, is zoned for Palestinian construction, which is a pre-condition for a permit to be issued by Israeli authorities, and most of these areas are already built up. Meanwhile, some 35 per cent of East Jerusalem has been zoned for Israeli settlements and 70 per cent of Area C is included

¹ OCHA Demolition Database (last accessed 24 September 2019). All information disclosed in this report is susceptible to change at any time depending on new available data.

within the boundaries of the regional councils of Israeli settlements and thereby off-limits for Palestinian development.²

As the Middle East Quartet found in its 2016 report, Palestinians are almost never granted building permits from Israeli authorities.³ Palestinians who build without permits face the risk of home demolition and other penalties, including costly fines. Official data released by Israeli authorities in 2015 indicated that an estimated 13 000 Palestinian structures in Area C were subject to outstanding demolition orders issued by the Israeli Civil Administration due to lack of required building permits.⁴ These pending demolition orders could be implemented at any moment. At least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli-issued building permit, potentially placing over 100 000 residents at risk of displacement.

The practice of enforcement measures such as demolitions and seizures of humanitarian assets are contrary to Israel's obligations under international law, including provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

V. OIC CONDEMNS INCURSION INTO AL-AQSA MOSQUE

On 16 October, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a [statement](#) as below:

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the incursion into the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa perpetrated by hordes of extremist settlers with the participation of the minister of agriculture and under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces, an aggression which the OIC considered as an extension of the recurrent Israeli violations against the sanctity of the holy sites and a glaring infraction against the Geneva Accord and international law.

The OIC placed all responsibility on the Israeli occupation government for any repercussions of such continued systematic aggressions, which represent a provocation against the sentiments of the entire Muslim community worldwide. At the same time, the OIC called on the international community, and more particularly on the UN Security Council, to shoulder their responsibility and put an end to these repetitive serious aggressions against the Islamo-Christian sanctuaries in the occupied Holy City of Al-Quds/Jerusalem.

² OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

³ Report of the Middle East Quartet of 1 July 2016.

⁴ According to Israeli Civil Administration figures, from January 2000 to mid-2016, Palestinians filed 5 475 applications for building permits. Only 226 (about 4 per cent) were granted. ICA data also indicates that there was a 3 per cent approval rate in 2018.

VI. UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS CALL ON ISRAEL TO PREVENT TORTURE

On 18 October, José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, and Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, issued a [statement](#) reflected in the press release below.

Israel must immediately investigate allegations that a Palestinian man, Samer Al-A'rbeed, was tortured in custody, say UN human rights experts.

According to information received by the experts, Israeli security forces arrested Mr. Al-A'rbeed outside his workplace in Ramallah on 25 September 2019. He was detained on suspicion of involvement in a bomb explosion that took place near the settlement of Dolev in the occupied West Bank in August 2019. A 17-year-old Israeli girl was killed and her brother and father were injured.

“We are gravely concerned that Mr. Al-A'rbeed has suffered torture and ill-treatment in the course of being interrogated and we call on the State of Israel to ensure a prompt and impartial criminal investigation,” the experts said.

Mr. Al-A'rbeed was admitted to hospital in a critical condition two days after his arrest, with several broken ribs, marks on his body and acute kidney failure. He is still in hospital and is dependent on kidney dialysis. He has also been banned from meeting his lawyer.

“We also urge Israel to revise its laws and practices and bring them into line with its international obligations prohibiting torture in absolute terms. The ban protects everyone, including suspects who are alleged to have committed serious offences.”

“We are very concerned about serious gaps in Israel’s laws and practices that may be in violation of an absolute prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including through allowing the use of so called ‘special interrogation measures’,” the experts said.

The prohibition of torture is absolute under international law and can therefore never be justified.

“We call on Israel to review its laws, policies and practices and bring them into line with its obligations under international law, particularly under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which were ratified by Israel in 1993,” the experts said.

VII. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR REPORTS ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OPT

On 21 October, the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk ([A/74/507](#)), was transmitted to the General Assembly. The conclusion and recommendations of the report follow:

IV. Conclusion

77. No occupation in the modern world has been conducted with the international community so alert to its many grave breaches of international law, so knowledgeable about the occupier's obvious and well-signalled intent to annex and establish permanent sovereignty, so well informed about the scale of suffering and dispossession endured by the protected population under occupation, and yet so unwilling to act upon the overwhelming evidence before it to use the tangible and plentiful legal and political tools at its disposal to end the injustice.

78. An international community that took seriously its legal responsibilities to challenge and end internationally wrongful acts would have concluded long ago that Israel, the occupying Power, was not sincere about seeking to end the occupation. It would have drawn the necessary lessons from the many unfulfilled Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the inordinate duration of the occupation, the innumerable facts on the ground and the aimless rounds of negotiations. It would have determined that the status quo of this occupation and annexation was endlessly sustainable without decisive international intervention because of the grossly asymmetrical balance of power on the ground. It would accept that its duty was not to oversee the management of the occupation, but to end it. Such an international community would take the prudent and necessary steps to collectively construct a list of effective countermeasures that would be appropriate and proportional to the circumstances. Should the occupying Power remain unmoved, the international community would apply and escalate the range of its targeted countermeasures until compliance had been achieved. It would realize that bold measures and the determination to enforce accountability in these circumstances would greatly improve the chances that the next obstinate occupier would not likely want to test its resolve.

V. Recommendations

79. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government of Israel should fully comply with its obligations under international law and that it should completely end its 52 years of occupation within a reasonable time period and enable the realization of Palestinian self-determination.

80. The Rapporteur recommends that the international community:

(a) In line with common article 1 to the Geneva Conventions, the articles of responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts and Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, take all measures, including countermeasures and sanctions, necessary to ensure the respect by Israel, and all other relevant parties, of their obligations under international law to end the occupation;

- (b) Seek to hold Israel to the international standards that all States are required to obey;
- (c) Ensure full accountability of Israeli political and military officials who are responsible for grave breaches of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;
- (d) Adopt the recommendation of the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued in June 2017. The General Assembly should make use of its powers under Article 96 (a) of the Charter of the United Nations to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal obligation of Israel to end the occupation and the international community's legal obligations and powers to ensure accountability and bring an end to impunity;
- (e) Commission a United Nations study on the legality of the Israeli annexation and continued occupation of the Palestinian territory.

VIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR MLADENOV BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

On 28 October, Nikolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, delivered a briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Excerpts from his briefing are replicated below ([S/PV.8648](#)).

...

We meet today as rapidly shifting developments in the Middle East continue to underscore the growing threat to international peace and security. As new, dangerous flashpoints emerge in the region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also remains one of the drivers of extremism and instability. The occupation continues and no progress has been made in realizing a negotiated two-State solution. It is a multigenerational tragedy for the peoples of this land.

On 26 September at the General Assembly (see A/74/PV.7), President Abbas announced his intention to set a date for Palestinian elections. If that decision were to materialize, it would be the first Palestinian elections since 2006, giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions. The international community should support this process if it strengthens national unity and not division. That includes an agreement for elections that take place across the occupied Palestinian territory, in line with relevant legislation, international best practices and an agreed national political platform that is based on existing agreements.

The past month has also witnessed the continuing deterioration of the situation on the ground. With no prospect of final-status negotiations on the horizon, facts on the ground continue to deteriorate, pushing us ever further from a viable two-State solution. During the past month it has been reported that the Israeli authorities advanced plans for housing units in Area C settlements. The exact numbers are yet to be confirmed. Even without this latest advancement, the number of units advanced or approved in 2019 so far is already greater than that for all of 2018. Settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. They must cease immediately.

Meanwhile, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, the authorities demolished or seized 51 structures, resulting in the displacement of 80 Palestinians, including 40 children. Four of the structures were demolished based on Military Order 1797.

Demolitions and confiscations of infrastructures and internationally funded humanitarian projects in Area C also continue at a concerning pace. The Israeli authorities must stop this practice, which is not in line with international humanitarian law, and compensate the population affected commensurately with the damages incurred.

Violence continues to be a major part of the day-to-day reality of the conflict. In recent weeks we have seen a welcome reduction of violence in Gaza, including in the launching of rockets. The agreements for calm brokered by the United Nations and Egypt continue to hold. Despite the overall improvement, however, three Palestinians were killed by the Israel Defense Forces, and more than 500 have been injured during protests at the Gaza perimeter fence.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the concerns expressed on 10 October by Deputy Special Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick on the impact that the violence at these demonstrations has had on children. The Israeli security forces have the responsibility to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly necessary, as a last resort. I also reiterate the call on Hamas to uphold its responsibility to ensure the safety of children in Gaza, including by preventing them from being used and exposed to the risk of violence.

During the reporting period, six rockets were launched from Gaza towards Israel, causing no injuries. Additionally, for the first time in a month, no fires were caused by incendiary balloons. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, two Palestinians were killed, including one infant following tear-gas inhalation. In addition, 88 Palestinians, including 11 children, were injured in various incidents, including during clashes, military operations and settler-related violence. Six Palestinian security forces personnel were also injured by home-made explosive devices during clashes with Palestinians. Four Israelis, including two Israel security forces personnel, were also injured, including one by Israeli settlers.

Among the overall incidents, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, settler-related violence resulted in 11 Palestinians and one Israeli injured. In addition, there were 33 incidents resulting in damage to Palestinian property, including some 1,236 trees and 63 vehicles, and one incident resulting in damage to an Israeli vehicle.

I am particularly concerned by the worrying attacks by settlers in the occupied West Bank, in the context of the annual olive harvest. As the olive harvest begins, I call on the authorities to ensure smooth access of Palestinian farmers to their land and to protect farmers and their property from attacks.

On 16 October, in an alarming incident, Palestinian farmers and Israeli and foreign volunteers harvesting olive trees near Burin village were attacked with stones and metal rods by people from the Yitzhar settlement. On 22 October the Yitzhar area was declared a closed military zone, and forces were deployed in it. An 80-year-old rabbi and four foreign volunteers were also injured. One of the alleged perpetrators of those attacks was arrested. In Qaryut, south of Nablus, Palestinians were also prevented from accessing their lands for the olive harvest.

During the reporting period, despite attempts to reach an agreement between the Israeli authorities and residents of the Al-Issawiya district, tensions remain high in East Jerusalem.

On 26 September, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) held its biannual meeting in New York. The United Nations highlighted the critical need to support the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority (PA) and to advance the two-State solution as the only viable option for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Moreover, at the meeting members noted that every effort must be made to avoid further deterioration in the security situations in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The United Nations also reported on progress in the implementation of the package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions for Gaza, endorsed by the AHLC in September 2018. The interventions have had an important impact across many sectors. The average daily availability of electricity in Gaza has doubled from 5.5 hours in the first half of 2018 to nearly 12 to 15 hours in the first half of 2019. This has increased water and wastewater treatment, reduced the need for expensive fuel to run hospitals and lowered costs for private businesses and families.

Almost 450,000 people in Gaza have benefited from emergency health care, and nearly 400,000 have benefited from the delivery of drugs and medical supplies. As of October, United Nations temporary job-creation programmes have produced more than 16,000 jobs, with another 1,000 jobs expected in the coming weeks. I thank those Member States that have supported the implementation of the AHLC projects so far and urge others to contribute to these critical initiatives.

Despite these vital efforts, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire. As of the end of September, almost half of essential medications and about a third of essential medical disposables are still missing. Health providers continue to struggle to treat those injured during the weekly demonstrations. Severe movement and access restrictions continue, including for those requiring treatment outside Gaza and national staff from United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations working in Gaza.

While addressing the humanitarian crisis must remain our priority, I reiterate once again that the core of the crisis in Gaza is political. It is not possible to genuinely and sustainably improve the socioeconomic situation in Gaza without significantly easing restrictions on the movement and access of goods and people, with the goal of ultimately lifting them, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian national authority.

In this regard, I once again call on all Palestinian factions to engage with Egypt on reconciliation efforts.

I am encouraged by the agreement reached on 3 October between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which resulted in the transfer of some \$425 million of clearance revenues to the PA. Despite the relative normalization of the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority, both sides must engage in a constructive manner with the goal of restoring the revenue transfers in full, in line with the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations.

On another positive note, I welcome the Palestinian Cabinet's decision on 21 October to advance amendments to the Palestinian civil-status law in favour of women. These include increasing the minimum age of marriage and granting women the right to manage their children's bank accounts. In recent months, Palestinian women have been actively voicing their demands for recognition of their political, social and economic rights and protection against gender-based violence.

I am concerned, however, about the 17 October decision by the Ramallah Magistrate Court that ordered the blocking of some 50 Palestinian and Arabic websites and Facebook pages deemed critical of the Palestinian Authority and its officials. The fundamental right of freedom of opinion and expression and its associated freedom to receive information are important and must be protected. Following criticism from the Journalist Syndicate and a petition from the National Human Rights Institution, the interpretation of the cybercrime presidential decree, which was used as the legal basis for the decision, was referred to the Constitutional Court on 24 October.

...

As we work to address the threats to international peace and security in the Middle East, we must never forget that preventive diplomacy is one of the most important tools that we can use in order to defuse tensions before they turn into confrontation. The people of the Middle East have seen enough violence and injustice. The region cannot afford another war and we must continue our efforts to de-escalate tensions and create openings for political solutions in the interest of peace. In that context, I would like to return to the Israeli-Palestinian question and remind everyone that despite our collective efforts to prevent war in Gaza, those efforts cannot be sustained on a purely humanitarian basis. They need a political perspective that illuminates a path forward to intra-Palestinian unity and, ultimately, a two-State solution. We can no longer continue to address Gaza's critical needs on a month-to-month basis while failing to confront the broader political reality, including the stiffening closures, violence and lack of unity.

Similarly, we can no longer disregard the cracks emerging in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Settlement construction and expansion continue, the PA financial crisis is not resolved and the economy continues to stagnate. Therefore, we must reassert that to advance the goal of lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the only way forward is to return to the negotiations with the goal of two States, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

As in Israel and Palestine, so in the rest of the Middle East, our collective efforts must be guided by the Charter of the United Nations. In each conflict in the region, preventive diplomacy and de-escalation are critical elements of our engagement. Long-term sustainable peace, however, can be based only on justice, human rights and international law.

IX. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIR ADDRESSES SECURITY COUNCIL

During the same Security Council meeting on 28 October, Ambassador Neville Gertze, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), made a [statement](#) to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, on behalf of the Committee, as below.

...

At the outset, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, I would like to commend the leadership of the delegation of South Africa in its presidency of the Security Council this month.

As we gather quarterly in the Council to collectively consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, I can only lament the ongoing illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory and the worsening situation on the ground, which have a negative impact not only on the rights of Palestinians, including children, but also on the security of Israelis and the prospects for a peaceful and just solution to the question of Palestine, which has already been too long delayed. The violence and loss of life have continued, illegal Israeli settlements have expanded, demolitions of Palestinian homes and evictions of their inhabitants have accelerated, and the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, has continued to deteriorate under the oppressive weight and as a result of the illegal practices of Israel's 52-year military occupation.

I want to reiterate in the strongest terms that the Israeli settlements in occupied areas are illegal under international law, and that as has been reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016), among other things, Israel must halt its expansion immediately and completely. The Committee joins the calls for the Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) to be provided in writing and to include Member States' reports on how they comply with operative paragraph 5, which requires Member States to distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Such measures of distinction are crucial to upholding international law, including the relevant United Nations resolutions, and to ensuring that this illegal situation does not receive support or recognition. In that regard, the Committee looks forward to the publication by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of the relevant database, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

The Committee would like to express its profound concern about the escalating rhetoric and threats by Israeli officials concerning intentions to annex settlements and the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley makes up 30 per cent of the occupied West Bank and is home to

more than 65,000 Palestinians. Annexation is strictly prohibited under international law and cannot go unchallenged by the international community, obliging the Council to act should any such aggression be committed. As was recently stated by Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk,

“By annexing these areas, Israel will further confine Palestinians to live in small, fragmented and disconnected cantons while others will continue to live under Israeli military rule. The annexation, if realized, will effectively ... entrench a one-State reality of separate and vastly unequal legal systems, political rights and social opportunities.”

The international community must consider what that would mean with regard to the viability of the long-standing international consensus on a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, which such an action would effectively terminate.

The Committee is also gravely concerned about the recurrent and rising tensions in Jerusalem at the holy sites, including continuing provocations, incitement and violations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Committee urges Israeli authorities to abide by international law and avoid actions that undermine an already fragile situation there, and calls for respect for the historic and legal status quo and the sanctity of the holy sites.

In Gaza, the situation also remains volatile, as weekly Great March of Return demonstrations and the ensuing casualties among Palestinian civilians have continued, alongside the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel. The dire economic situation, especially the insufficient energy supply, combined with the scarcity of essential medicines, is causing a health crisis, with the health system reported to be near collapse. We reiterate our call on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by international standards with regard to the use of force. We also call on Palestinian militants in Gaza to stop the indiscriminate firing of rockets into southern Israel.

The Committee welcomes the steps taken by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians as presented in its September report to bring relief to the population through a package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions for Gaza. These measures should go hand in hand with efforts to address the continuing fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian Government, which hampers its ability to deliver services to the population.

In September, UNRWA was able to reopen 709 schools, allowing 530,000 refugee children to continue their education. However, the Agency’s financial situation remains challenging albeit improved following the ministerial pledging conference held on 26 September in New York. The Committee reiterates its call on all Member States to provide UNRWA with the reliable and sustainable funding necessary to deliver critical humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees in all five fields of operation, contributing to their development and protection and to stability in the region. We also urge Member States to continue strongly supporting its General Assembly mandate, which is to be renewed in November.

We commend Egypt and others for their ongoing efforts to advance the reconciliation process and call on the Palestinian parties to actively engage towards that end. Achieving

reconciliation and holding general elections, which will be organized soon, as announced by President Mahmoud Abbas during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see A/74/PV.7), would constitute positive steps towards reuniting the Palestinian people under a single, legitimate Palestinian national Government.

Finally, the only just and viable solution to ensure peace and prosperity in the region remains the international consensus on how to resolve the conflict: two States living side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State.

We are at a critical juncture, and it is time for the parties and the rest of the international community alike to break the inertia and walk the talk. We must implement all the resolutions adopted in this Chamber and face our collective responsibility vis-à-vis past and future generations of Palestinians and Israelis.

We all know that making the two-State solution a reality is the only way forward for peace and stability in the region. It is time to act to bring an end to the Israeli occupation; to realize the long-denied Palestinian rights, including to self-determination and freedom; and to make peace a reality. Failure to act will only hasten the demise of the two-State solution and bring more conflict and suffering.

X. UN WOMEN AND UNOPS PARTNER TO SUPPORT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SHELTERS

On 29 October, UN Women and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) issued a joint [press release](#), as below.

Under the HAYA Joint Programme, UN Women and UNOPS are working together to provide support to shelters delivering various services for women and girls at risk or survivors of gender-based violence. In close coordination with the national partners, UN Women will rehabilitate as well as provide technical and financial support to shelters through UNOPS and other civil society organizations during the next three years. This includes the shelters Mehwar Centre for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Families, Al Bayt Al Amen Nablus, Bait Al Tawrea Jericho, and the Hayat Centre in Gaza.

The support provided for these shelters will serve to improve their institutional, organisational, and technical capacities while increasing the level of coordination among the different shelters. This will also help combine the number of quality services provided to survivors of violence and help their reintegration to society. All work with the shelters will be coordinated through with national governmental and nongovernmental partners.

“Our joint goal is for Palestinian women and girls to have access to a full package of services that provide protection as well as support them in reintegrating into their society,” explained Ms. Maryse Guimond, UN Women Special Representative in Palestine. “To do so, we will work with local stakeholders in enhancing the quality and accessibility of these services, improving the capacity, attitudes, and behaviours of those providing this support.”

With the local actors, UNOPS will take the lead on rehabilitating and refurbishing these shelters to become more gender-sensitive, inclusive, and free of discrimination to provide higher quality services to women and girls.

“Through this joint programme, UNOPS aims to support the upgrading of the physical structure of four shelters to improve the shelters’ capacities to provide protection services to women facing violence as well as improve access to quality protection services” Mr. Tokumitsu Kobayashi, Director of UNOPS in Palestine.

Ms. Hazam Tahbub, HAYA’s Joint Programme Manager, stressed the importance of these shelters to the lives of those experiencing gender-based violence. “The HAYA Joint Programme supports shelters that provide a safe space to women and their children who are fleeing situations of abuse.” She added, “We support these shelters to maintain the privacy and safety of each resident and to provide services to meet the basic needs of survivors and their children. Through these shelters, survivors of violence can find support to meet any specialised needs including accessibility for women or children with disabilities.”

In the West Bank, 29.9 per cent of ever-married women in the West Bank and 51 per cent in the Gaza Strip have experienced violence, with less than 1 per cent of them seeking government or civil society organizational support, due to the fear of stigma and social exclusion or reprisal, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) 2011 Violence Survey. Violence against women is one of the most widespread and systematic human rights violations and an impediment to achieving gender equality and sustainable development overall.
