



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. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS CALL ON ISRAEL TO RECONSIDER THE CHARGES AGAINST PALESTINIAN ACTIVIST

*On 7 July 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, called on the Government of Israel to carefully reconsider the charges against Palestinian human rights defender Issa Amro. The following is a [press release](#) issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:*

Israel should carefully reconsider the charges it is pursuing against Palestinian human rights defender Issa Amro, two United Nations independent experts said today.

Mr. Amro, founder of the Hebron-based Youth Against Settlements, is facing trial in an Israeli military court on a number of charges, some of which date back a number of years and have only recently been reactivated.

“On the information available to us, many of the charges against Mr. Amro appear to be directed squarely at his lawful right to peacefully protest against the 50-year-old Israeli occupation,” said the Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Michael Lynk, and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Michel Forst, in a joint statement.

“The non-violent work of human rights defenders must not be disrupted and attacked by the authorities, even under a military occupation,” the experts underscored. “Their rights to freedom of expression and assembly must be respected and protected.”

Mr. Amro and Youth Against Settlements have campaigned against the Israeli military’s shut-down of the once-thriving Palestinian neighborhood around Shuhada Street in Hebron, and against illegal Israeli settlements in and near the

city. Their activities have included running a community centre, organizing protest marches and opposing the many restrictions placed by the military on daily Palestinian life, the two experts noted.

The Rapporteurs said Palestinian human rights defenders, including Mr. Amro, have faced a long pattern of harassment, intimidation, discriminatory treatment and physical interference from the Israeli military and settler groups.

Mr. Lynk and Mr. Forst called upon the Government of Israel to strictly abide by international human rights law in its dealings with human rights defenders.

“We are also deeply concerned about the quality of justice available to Palestinians under occupation,” they added. “The Israeli military court system – which all Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to – has a conviction rate above 99%, which raises serious concerns about the system meeting many of the international standards of due process required by human rights and humanitarian law.

“If the Israeli military court convicts Mr. Amro on any of the charges against him, the convictions will be stained by reasonable doubts about the system’s ability to ensure justice,” the Special Rapporteurs said.

## II. UN COUNTRY TEAM IN THE OPT RELEASES NEW REPORT, “GAZA: TEN YEARS LATER”

*On 11 July 2017, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the occupied Palestinian territory released a new report, “Gaza: Ten Year Later,” which updates the findings of a 2012 report entitled, “Gaza in 2020”. The following is a summary of the [report](#):*

Since the publication in 2012 of the UNCT’s report on ‘Gaza 2020’<sup>1</sup>, Gaza’s population has increased by 400,000, reaching 2 million people by the end of 2016. Gaza’s population is projected to further increase to 2.2 million by 2020 and to 3.1 million by 2030<sup>2</sup> – just 12 years away.

Reviewing the indicators which in 2012 led the UN to question whether Gaza would become ‘unliveable’ by 2020, it is clear that very little progress has been made to change the basic trajectory identified in 2012. The population has actually grown slightly faster than projected and neither the economy nor basic infrastructure and services have been able– even remotely – to keep pace. The findings of this report indicate that most of the projections for 2020 have in fact deteriorated even further and faster than anticipated.

In 2012, the UN projected an annual growth rate of real GDP per capita in Gaza of 0.6-1.5%, or even as high as 5.7-6.6% if a significant easing of trade and other restrictions were to take place. Since then, real GDP per capita in Gaza has instead decreased. Provision of basic services, including health and education, has continued to decline, as the needs for additional health clinics and classrooms and

doctors, nurses and teachers, outlined in the 2020 report, have not been met. Instead, the number of doctors, nurses and hospital beds, relative to the population, declined by 15, 12 and 5 percentage points respectively between 2010 and 2017; and the teacher/student ratio declined by more than five percentage points over the past five years. It should be noted that these reductions do not apply to services provided by UNRWA, where the teacher-student ratio has improved in recent years.

The only indicator which has not deteriorated as quickly as was projected in 2012, relates to the water aquifer. The projection in 2012 that the aquifer would become unusable by 2016, has now been shifted to the end of 2017, thanks mainly to a doubling of water supplied by the Israeli water company and paid for by the Palestinian Authority (PA). But there is little to celebrate as by the end of this year, Gaza’s only water source will be depleted, and irreversibly-so by 2020, unless immediate remedial action is taken.

In addition to the impact of the violent Hamas takeover and ensuing Israeli measures imposed in 2007, three rounds of armed hostilities between Israel and Hamas – with the most devastating round in 2014 – have dealt repeated blows to the Gazan economy and damaged essential infrastructure. As a result, the past three years have been focused mainly on the reconstruction of conflict-damages, drawing attention away from the desperate needs that Gaza faced even before the conflict in 2014. Huge reconstruction needs triggered an

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory: Gaza 2020, August 2012: <http://www.unsco.org/Documents/Media/Gaza%20in%202020%20-%20a%20liveable%20place.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>UNFPA Palestine: Palestine 2030 - Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development: <http://palestine.unfpa.org/publications/palestine-2030-demographic-change-opportunities-development#sthash.XBsKxTiU.dpuf>

easing in imports of construction material to Gaza, particularly through the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), but access to material necessary to allow the Gazan economy to recover and expand remains highly restricted.

Despite the warnings issued by the UN in 2012, Gaza has continued on its trajectory

of de-development, in many cases even faster than the UN had originally projected. Ongoing humanitarian assistance and international service delivery, especially through UNRWA's services, are helping slow this descent, but the downward direction remains clear.

### III. UNDP REPORT FINDS THAT GAZA HAS NOT RECOVERED FROM THE 2014 WAR

*On 12 July 2017, the UN Development Programme released a new report, "Three Years After the 2014 Gaza Hostilities, Beyond Survival: Challenges to Economic Recovery and Long Term Development". The following is the executive summary of the [report](#):*

Three years after the 2014 hostilities (08 July– 26 August), Gaza is yet to recover from the extensive destruction caused by the conflict. A crippling Israeli economic blockade (land, air and sea), now entering its eleventh year, continues to take a debilitating toll on all aspects of life in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a loss in potential GDP of over 50%.<sup>1</sup> One-third of Gaza's arable land, and more than half of its Oslo-agreed fishing waters – both unilaterally declared by Israel as high risk/no-go zones – remain off-limits to Gazan economic use. Isolated and under severe restrictions on movement of people and trade, Gaza's economic troubles are further compounded by continued chronic shortages in electricity, water<sup>2</sup>, and fuel supplies, and by an unconventional institutional and regulatory environment caused by ten years of Palestinian internal political split.

Despite reported progress in housing and infrastructure repairs<sup>3</sup>, three years after the latest hostilities Gaza's reconstruction is

proceeding slower than expected and falling behind schedule. As of 31 December 2016, the latest update from the World Bank indicates that only 51% (US\$1.796 billion) of the US\$3.5 billion pledged for Gaza reconstruction at the October 2014 Cairo Conference has been disbursed.<sup>4</sup> Of the disbursed funds, only US\$670 million, or 17% of the estimated US\$3.875 billion estimated recovery and reconstruction plan of the Palestinian government – titled "Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) and Recovery Framework for Gaza Reconstruction" – were allocated to finance priority needs in five identified sectors affected by the 2014 war.<sup>5</sup> Critically, only US\$16 million of the disbursed money was allocated to meet the productive sector's recovery needs estimated by the DNA at US\$602 million.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (19 September 2016), p. 5

<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see Gisha, Hand on the Switch: Who's responsible for Gaza's infrastructure crisis? (January 2017).

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (May 4, 2017), Annex 2, pp. 30-33.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Reconstructing Gaza - Donor Pledges (April 6, 2017). The World Bank is mandated by the PA and Norway (as the AHL Cchair) to keep track of, and periodically report on, the disbursement progress of the financial pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo conference for reconstructing Gaza.

<sup>5</sup> State of Palestine, Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) and Recovery Framework for Gaza Reconstruction (August 2015). The five sectors are: infrastructure, productive, social protection, social development, and governance. The DNA is supported by the EU, the UN and the World Bank.

<sup>6</sup> See Figure (6), Chapter (3) in this report.

Without any real change in the status quo, and with the government's DNA programme currently underfunded, Gaza's economic recovery remains a distant goal. However, given the scale of Gaza's ongoing economic predicament, inaction will have serious and widespread consequences, including higher rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, worsening infrastructure, the dwindling of even basic public services, including education and healthcare; continued environmental degradation and deepening institutional decay.

Gaza's population (43% of which is under the age of 15) is growing at a rate of 3.3% per year (2016),<sup>7</sup> recently surpassing the 2 million mark. Its young labour force is increasing by 4.5% per year, with the majority of new entrants to the labour market – estimated at 35,000 annually – becoming unemployed. Currently, the unemployment rate for youth (aged 15-29) of 56.0% is the highest in the world and is only likely to increase.<sup>8</sup> Gaza's economy, however, has stagnated for the past ten years, with average annual real GDP growth rate over the last decade (2006-2016) not exceeding 1.44% (and only 0.17% for the period 2006-2014), while Gaza population grew by 38.4% over the same period. Based on the findings of an IMF report, output growth of at least 4.5% per year is needed just to absorb the new entrants to the job market.<sup>9</sup> Thus, GDP growth that surpasses population growth will be required in order to reduce both chronic unemployment,

currently at 40.6%,<sup>10</sup> and to improve ongoing sub-standard living conditions.

Gaza's private sector, the engine of future economic growth potential, is presently incapacitated due to the blockade, restrictions on movement and access to natural resources and markets, the strict application of "dual-use" items list system, and recurrent destructive wars. A 2016 UNDP survey of Gaza's private sector two years after the war (Chapter three, Section C, and the Annex) reveals the sector's continued decline (in terms of capital assets, production and sales, employment, and exports; all at 50%-60% of their pre-2014 war levels). This has been exacerbated by grossly inadequate international financial support to address the extensive damage and losses caused by the war and to help initiate recovery. Further analysis of Gaza's current business environment (Chapter four) reveals a very small, micro enterprise-based private sector that has been operating for years, but mainly since 2006, under considerable internal and external pressure. The emerging picture also reveals a very poor business climate that touches on all aspects of business activities, from investment decisions, to production operations, to the delivery of final output. In such a constrained business climate, the degree of risk and uncertainty for investors is extremely high, the cost of doing business is frequently prohibitive, and the level of confidence among private sector agents is correspondingly low.

For years, the international community has been providing financial and technical support, in addition to the badly needed humanitarian aid, in an attempt to alleviate the adverse impact of the stringent conditions under which Gaza businesses are operating, in order to ensure their continued

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<sup>7</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Summary of Demographic Indicators in the Palestine by Region (PCBS website). West Bank annual population growth, meanwhile, is 2.5%.

<sup>8</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Labor Force Survey (October-December, 2016), February 13, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> MF, West Bank and Gaza: Labor Market Trends, Growth and Unemployment (December 2012).

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<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Labor Force Survey (October-December, 2016), February 13, 2017

survival. Currently, donors' incremental, project by project, ad hoc approach to providing assistance has provided only limited success in bolstering Gaza's private sector.

It is clear that a fresh approach is needed to create a sustainable private sector that can boost Gaza's resilience. Gaza's economy requires a fundamental long-term strategic policy shift from the international development community, under which short-term measures are complemented by programmes that focus on long-term sustainability. In this alternative approach, Gaza needs to be looked at for its strategic development potential rather than as a humanitarian burden.

This study proposes an alternative approach to be implemented within the context of the Palestinian government's DNA recovery and reconstruction programme. The proposed approach consists of three inseparable core components: (1) Accelerated short-term financial support to address the urgent needs of Gaza's private sector, as identified by the DNA framework and by Gazan business owners. To be effective however, these short-term measures should be linked to a longer term plan, as an integral part of a strategic view to Gaza's economic future. (2) The design of a comprehensive plan for the medium- and long-term development of Gaza's private-sector-led economy. The plan, which is currently missing from the DNA framework, should be based on an in-depth analysis of Gaza's business climate, and on sector strategies, and be utilised afterward as a core guide of where future international and domestic investment should be allocated. (3) A persistent effort by the international community to resolve the political conditions that are the root cause of Gaza's humanitarian crisis. For short-term interventions to be effective, and for a long-

term strategic plan to have a real chance of successful implementation, a mechanism to ensure short- and long-term stability of political and security conditions must be in place.

This last component is the most challenging of all, and yet, there is no other way out. If the root causes of Gaza's economic crisis are political, then that is where the first step of a sustainable solution must be found.

Under unchanging political conditions, the future of Gaza and its inhabitants is bleak. When the UN is already predicting Gaza to be unliveable by 2020, then those with high stakes in the future of a fragmented State of Palestine should take a moment for serious pause.

## **Recommendations**

**1. Provide** urgent financial support/grants to compensate for the extensive damage and losses sustained by private sector businesses as a result of continued Israeli blockade and the multiple Gaza military operations, especially the 2014 conflict.

**2. Accelerate** post-war donor-funded reconstruction, including granting financial support to sectors and sub-sectors badly affected by the 2014 conflict, which are still in desperate need of financial assistance to maintain and replace damaged equipment, and to purchase raw materials so as to enable them resume operations. [As the main findings of the subsequent UNDP's private sector survey have shown, only a fraction of the total value of the inflicted damage to the productive sector has been covered].

**3. Coordinate** the rapid entry of the raw materials, equipment, machinery, and spare parts from/through Israel, especially

those that are restricted from entering Gaza due to continued Israeli application of the “dual-use items” list.

**4. Remove** Israeli restrictions on access to Gaza’s Oslo-agreed, 20-nautical miles territorial Mediterranean waters, by progressively expanding fishing areas so as to revive Gaza’s struggling fishing sector crippled by the imposition of the Israeli naval blockade.

**5. Simplify** the currently vague and confusing tax system, made complicated by the mid-2007 Palestinian political divide between the *de facto* Hamas-controlled Gaza and Ramallah-based Palestinian government in the West Bank. Also, provide tax exemption for war-damaged businesses until they are able to recover.

**6. Establish** specialised training programmes needed to support Gazan businesses with professionally skilled workers. Also, expand the application of “cash for work” programmes that contribute a to short-term solution for chronic youth unemployment problem in Gaza.

**7. Assist** in linking Gazan private sector leaders, and Gazan professionals, with their counterparts in the West Bank, the region, and internationally. This should include facilitating participation in trade

fairs and exhibitions, attending high level workshops and conferences, as well as visits to regional and global businesses and business-related councils and chambers.

**8. Agree** on a set of rules and principles that govern the daily movement of people and goods across border crossings with Israel in order to minimize/eliminate current uncertainties and high costs associated with present import and export and movement conditions.

**9. Address**, urgently, Gaza’s chronic electricity problem, with its very costly power outages and its highly inefficient rationing system. Immediate solutions should include securing adequate funds to purchase fuel supplies for Gaza Power Plant to enable operation at its 120 MW full capacity, and to work closely with Israel to expedite the establishment of a new electricity line to Gaza in order to increase current 120 MW supply from Israel.

**10. Start** the preparation for the design of sub-sectoral, sectoral, and comprehensive plans needed to develop Gaza’s private sector. A thorough study of the problems and bottleneck currently crippling the Strip’s business environment – along the same lines introduced in Chapter – should constitute the first step in his direction.



#### IV. WHO REPORT CALLS FOR IMPROVED HEALTH ACCESS IN THE OPT

*On 12 July 2017, the World Health Organization issued a new report, “Right to Health: Crossing Barriers to Access Health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2016”. The following are the executive summary and recommendations from the [report](#):*

##### **Executive Summary**

The fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to Israeli movement restrictions has been especially disruptive for the functioning of the Palestinian health system and the continuity of patient care. The Palestinian Ministry of Health purchases referral medical care from other health service providers, most frequently for cancer and subspecialty services from East Jerusalem hospitals, when treatment is not available in its own facilities. Unrestricted access to medical care is crucial for patients. In this report WHO presents data on health access in the oPt in 2016, and focuses on the bureaucratic barriers to Palestinian health caused by policies of the occupation that restrict access for patients, health personnel and ambulances.

Quantitative detailed data for patient referrals, for requests for Israeli permits for health access, and for attacks on health facilities, patients and health personnel were obtained from official Palestinian sources and health providers, in addition to qualitative narratives on patients’ experiences with health access. Data was analysed for trends over time.

In 2016, 83.7% of the 91,927 referrals issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health were to Palestinian medical centres. Fifty-two per cent were located in East Jerusalem, which is accessible for patients with West Bank or Gaza identity cards only if they obtain an Israeli-issued permit. Permits were also required for the 14.3% of referrals to Israeli hospitals, while the 2% of referrals to Egypt and Jordan required the approval of both Israel and the foreign government.

Of note is a small rise in the proportion of total referrals for West Bank patients in recent years, which may reflect their easier access to local care than Gaza patients, who are more dependent on outside referrals requiring permits for exiting the Gaza Strip and have more difficulty in obtaining these. Only a limited number of patients were able to exit through Rafah in 2016 owing to the closure of the borders since mid-2013.

Every year the burdensome permit application process and security procedures result in delays and denial of care for thousands of Palestinian patients, and patient companions. WHO’s analysis indicates that there is a declining rate of approval of permit requests for patients since 2012, from 92.5% in 2012, to 88.7% in 2013, to 82.4% in 2014, to 77.5% in 2015 and to 62.1% in 2016. In 2016, the approval rate for permits for Gaza patients to cross Erez checkpoint was the lowest recorded by WHO since 2008, representing a 15% drop from the previous year: 62.07% of 26,282 permit applications submitted for Gaza patients in 2016 were approved, 6.57% were denied, and 31.36% of applicants did not receive a response to their applications in time for their medical appointments, and had to reapply with new appointments, postponing medical care. The approval rate for permits for patient companions was even lower (53%), a particular problem for parents accompanying sick children and for companions of the elderly and disabled. In the West Bank, of 190,733 permit applications submitted by patients and companions, 80.34% were approved, a drop of almost 3% from 2015. The most frequent reason given for permit denial by the Israeli security services is security.

All international legal duty bearers must act to improve health access in the occupied Palestinian territory. We hope that by providing credible and detailed evidence of the difficulties that Palestinians face in accessing necessary health care, this report will assist health advocacy efforts by the international community aimed at holding duty bearers to their legal obligations to respect and fulfil the right to health in the occupied Palestinian territory.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Consider establishing a task force with representatives from Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the aim to follow up on the recommendations from the World Health Assembly.

2. Israeli authorities have the following obligations under international law:

- Establish procedures, which enable un-delayed access 24/7, for all Palestinian patients requiring specialized health care, including exit out of Gaza and access into Jerusalem, and which at the same time safeguard Israeli security concerns;

- Establish procedures which ensure Palestinian health care personnel to be able to work, train and specialise in the oPt (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) and abroad.

- Establish procedures which enable ambulances to have free access to patients and health care institutions without unnecessary delay. All procedures should be clear, consistent and predictable to all parties and criteria for permit approvals should be in writing and publicly accessible.

3. Health workers

- Israeli authorities should ensure that health care workers have unhindered access

to their workplace, and have possibilities for professional development and specialisation.

4. Protection obligations

- All parties should adhere to the UN Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) stating relevant customary international law concerned with the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and medical facilities.

- Health care workers need to be respected and protected, and should not be prevented in their provision of health care to sick or injured patients. Information about this obligation to respect and protect health care workers and facilities and not to impede the provision of health care by preventing passage of medical personnel should be disseminated to security personnel at checkpoints and borders, armed forces and law enforcement personnel.

- MoH and PRCS should continue to systematically document and monitor attacks on health care to ensure accountability of perpetrators.

5. Prisoner health

- Israeli and Palestinian authorities should consider organising the prison health services independently from the prison services to ensure impartiality, and independent quality health services.

- Security controlled Palestinian physicians should be allowed to visit patients regularly in Israeli prisons.

- No one should be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All complaints of torture should be investigated.

## V. POWER SHORTAGES IN GAZA DEEPENING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, SAY UN RIGHTS EXPERTS

*On 12 July 2017, seven UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concern that longstanding power shortages in Gaza have deepened the humanitarian crisis. The following is the related [press release](#) issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:*

Longstanding power shortages in Gaza have deepened the humanitarian crisis with hospitals in precarious conditions, water shortages growing, and untreated sewage being dumped into the Mediterranean, United Nations independent human rights experts\* today warned.

“The two million residents of Gaza are suffering through a humanitarian crisis that is entirely human-made,” the experts said. “It represents a complete failure of all parties to uphold their fundamental human rights obligations, including the inalienable right to life.”

“Reports indicate that electricity is now available for six consecutive hours at the most, often less, followed by 12 hour periods of blackout. The situation is untenable,” they warned.

The experts said Israel’s recent implementation of a decision by the Palestinian Authority to further reduce electricity supplies by up to 40% was leading to an unprecedented deterioration in the provision of critical services.

Israel, as the occupier controlling the entry and exit of goods and people, bore the

primary responsibility for the deterioration of the situation, they said, and should honour its commitments under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Rapporteurs emphasized, however, that the current dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas over the payment of fuel taxes led to the recent additional cuts, and has contributed to significantly worsening the crisis.

“We call on all those involved to immediately resolve their issues, and not to further penalize the residents of Gaza for political disputes among elites,” they said. “We call on the international community not to turn a blind eye to Gaza. And we call for a full and immediate end to the 10-year blockade and closure, which amounts to collective punishment contrary to international law.”

Fuel recently supplied by Egypt had provided some relief, but was not a permanent solution, the experts added, warning of the severe impact on health services and almost every aspect of daily life.

“Many operating rooms have now been shut down, basic health services have been drastically cut and complex diagnostic equipment and interventions are available only intermittently,” they said.

The experts noted that drinkable desalinated water is becoming less and less available, while untreated sewage continues to be dumped into the Mediterranean at the

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\* **The experts:** Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; Mr. Dainius Pūras, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (right to health); Ms. Leilani Farha, 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; Ms. Hilal Elver, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Mr. Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; Mr. Léo Heller, Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation; and Mr. Saad Alfargi, Special Rapporteur on the right to development.

rate of 100 million litres a day and is possibly worsening aquifer contamination.

“Families are struggling to safely store and prepare food without refrigeration – a recipe for disaster when combined with the weakened health services. Cooking, heating and lighting, and other fundamentals of the right to housing are jeopardized. People with disabilities, older people and women are being hit especially hard,” they said.

“The agricultural sector is also suffering severely limited irrigation, which will worsen widespread food insecurity if the situation continues.”

The independent experts said the power crisis was being overlaid onto a population

which had already suffered years of struggle, poverty and intense conflict.

“This current crisis only compounds the residents’ fast-growing sense of despair and hopelessness,” they said warning that after 10 years of closure and blockade, Gaza is living with of the world’s highest unemployment rates, economic stagnation, and a backwards march towards ‘de-development’.

“This crippling crisis has been imposed on people whose livelihoods were already at breaking point. The economy may now face damage beyond the point of revival. As in any crisis like this, the poorest and most vulnerable suffer the most,” the human rights experts stressed.

## **VI. QUARTET ENVOYS EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERN OVER THE WORSENING HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN GAZA**

*The following joint [statement](#) was issued on 13 July 2017 by the Quartet envoys:*

“On 13 July, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met in Jerusalem to discuss current efforts to advance Middle East peace, as well as the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

The Envoys expressed serious concern over the situation worsening humanitarian in Gaza and discussed current efforts to resolve the crisis.

The Envoys from the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations agreed to meet again and to continue their regular engagement with Israelis and Palestinians, and key regional stakeholders.”

## VII. SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES CONDUCTS FACT-FINDING VISIT

*From 12 to 14 July 2017, the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories conducted an annual fact-finding visit to Amman. The following is a [press release](#) issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 17 July 2017:*

A United Nations committee\* has heard serious concerns about Israel's human rights record, including the deteriorating situation in Gaza, inadequate protection for detained children and increasing obstacles being faced by human rights defenders and journalists.

Members of the Committee also heard testimony on the expansion of settlements, the ongoing use of administrative detention, excessive use of force and possible extrajudicial killings, and lack of accountability.

During its annual mission to Amman, Jordan, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, established by General Assembly Resolution 2443 in 1968, heard from civil society organizations, UN representatives and Palestinian officials.

Based on this testimony, the Committee clearly observed that the Israeli authorities

continue with policies and practices that negatively impact the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, compounded by the ongoing electricity crisis, was repeatedly raised as one of the most pressing issues.

The Committee heard with concern about the atmosphere of increasing hopelessness and desperation among the population of Gaza as Israel's blockade and closure continues for its tenth year, with ongoing restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza impacting every aspect of life for residents.

Other testimony described with grave concern the situation of Palestinian detainees reportedly living in difficult conditions in Israeli prisons. The continued use of administrative detention was also raised as an area of ongoing concern.

The Committee heard troubling testimony regarding the arrest and detention of children, including cases of reported ill-treatment and lack of adequate protection.

Organizations told the Committee that Israeli settlement expansion had continued in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan, with a notably high level of new construction announced this year, in violation of international humanitarian law.

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\* **The UN Special Committee** to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1968 to examine the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The Special Committee is composed of three Member States: Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Senegal. This year the Member States are represented by H.E. Mr. Shahrul Ikram Yaakob (acting chair of the Special Committee), Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in New York, H.E. Mr. Sabarullah Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York, and H.E. Mr. Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations in Geneva, who was represented by Mr. M. Serigne Dieye, Chargé d'Affaires, Permanent Mission of Senegal to the UN in Geneva on this mission.

Settlements were having a negative impact on the human rights of Palestinians, including by restricting freedom of movement and further fragmenting life in the West Bank, the Committee heard.

Other issues raised included the effects of the separation wall on Palestinians' rights, and the demolition of homes and other structures in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, as well as in the Syrian Golan. The use of punitive demolitions in the West Bank including East Jerusalem was described as a form of collective punishment.

Organizations described the practice of demolishing homes as one that increases pressure on vulnerable communities such as the Bedouin communities in Area C to leave their homes, which they noted could amount to unlawful forcible transfer.

Many organizations highlighted with concern the continued lack of accountability for allegations of excessive use of force and

violations of international law by the Israeli forces, including during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza. A number of organizations emphasized that the lack of accountability further exacerbated the cycle of violence.

Human rights defenders and journalists seeking to highlight violations of human rights and humanitarian law told the Committee that the space in which they were free to operate was shrinking at an alarming rate. They reported cases of the detention of peaceful demonstrators and the targeting of journalists covering protests.

The Government of Israel does not recognize the Committee, which was therefore unable to speak to the relevant Israeli authorities or access the occupied territories.

The Committee will submit a [full report](#) on its mission and other activities to the UN General Assembly in November 2017.

## **VIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR DEEPLY CONCERNED BY ESCALATING TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE IN JERUSALEM**

*On 20 July 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#):*

“I am deeply concerned by the recent surge in tensions and violence around the holy esplanade in the Old City of Jerusalem.

I welcome the commitment of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to uphold and respect the status quo at the holy sites, and Palestinian President Abbas' firm condemnation of violence, specifically the deadly attack on two Israeli policemen on 14 July.

I hope these affirmations will contribute to resolving the concerns of all parties and

put an end to the provocative rhetoric that has added to the escalation over the past week. I note the importance of the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the historical role of King Abdullah II, as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

I call on all concerned parties to de-escalate the situation and on moderate voices to speak up against those who try to fuel tensions.”



## IX. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE AND OIC CONVENE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM

*The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) jointly convened the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem on 20 and 21 July 2017 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The following is a [communiqué](#) that was issued by the organizers of the conference as well as the [Chair's summary](#):*

### **Communiqué on the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque**

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

We, organizers of the International Conference on Jerusalem, strongly condemn Israel's closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the banning of Friday prayers. These measures and all other restrictions imposed by Israel, the occupying power, in violation of the historic status quo and international law, constitute both a blatant aggression against those who wish to attend these holy sites in Jerusalem, and an attack on the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to worship at these sites.

These provocations, violations and attacks against Palestinian worshipers, aggravate religious sensitivities and tension, and should be immediately brought to an end to avoid a dangerous escalation of the situation on the ground.

We call on the international community to urgently reaffirm respect for the historic status quo, and to compel Israel, the occupying power, to rescind all measures that violate this historic status quo, including the installation of metal detectors, and to comply with its obligations under international law. We call on all parties concerned to work to calm the situation and

avoid any steps that may increase the tension.

We reaffirm the longstanding international condemnation, enshrined in UN General Assembly and UN Security Council resolutions, of all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and stress that only an end of the Israeli occupation will pave the way for a just and lasting peace.

### **Chairman's Summary**

The **International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem** was convened in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 20 and 21 July 2017 under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and with support by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The theme of the Conference was "*Jerusalem and the international community: providing political and economic support*".

The Conference aims were two-fold: (1) to provide up-to-date information on the situation in the City, especially in light of the ongoing deteriorating situation following the incidents around the Al-Aqsa Mosque; and (2) to present ideas and proposals about how the international community, especially OIC Member States, can provide concrete support to the Palestinian population in Jerusalem, with a focus on education and

training for fostering resilience, especially among youth, and on economic recovery and development, in particular in the tourism sector.

The Conference brought together international experts, including from Palestine and Israel, representatives of the diplomatic community and the public.

At the Opening Session, the representative of the host country, **Ambassador Shahin Abdullayev**, described the question of Jerusalem as “one of the most important, albeit complex” parts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and stressed that its resolution should be at the centre of international efforts to establish a just and lasting peace in the region. In that regard, he called for the official establishment of East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders.

**United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča**, who attended the Conference as the representative of Secretary-General António Guterres, stated that while it was high time to create the conditions for a return to direct negotiations so as to resolve all final status issues, including the question of Jerusalem, international partners must help to address the socioeconomic challenges confronting those living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge to “leave no one behind”.

The **Chair of the Conference, Amb. Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela)**, delivered a statement on behalf of the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Fodé Seck (Senegal), calling on the international community to wrest the issue of the City from the hands of radicals and fanatics, and turn it “from a topic of

confrontation into one of cooperation”. One way to accomplish that goal was to provide concrete support to the Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem. Speaking in his national capacity, he highlighted the recent Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and called upon the participants to send a further message against Israeli policies in East Jerusalem.

**Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Samir Bakr**, expressed concern that Israel’s recent escalation of the conflict in Jerusalem would only exacerbate the situation and give it a religious dimension with dangerous repercussions. He urged the international community to hold Israel accountable, pointing out that, as the occupying Power, it continued its attempts to isolate Jerusalem’s Palestinian population and to obliterate the City’s Islamic character.

On behalf of the State of Palestine, **Ambassador Riyad Mansour** stated that because of Israel’s recent activities Jerusalem faced a particularly dangerous moment, which carried the risk of extremists turning the conflict into a religious confrontation. He proposed that the Conference conclude with a communiqué rejecting the closure of holy sites and calling on Israel to guarantee that the historic status quo would be maintained.

Following the Opening Session, Member States and Organisations read out official statements, among them Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Turkey and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. (The documents will be available on the Committee website in due course.)

In the first plenary session on “*Life in East Jerusalem under occupation*”, speakers warned that tensions between Israelis and



Palestinians in Jerusalem had reached a breaking point. Israel's continued settlement enterprise in East Jerusalem went hand-in-hand with discriminatory practices against the Palestinian population in education, housing and social services among other areas. An Israeli expert highlighted that on both sides radical voices are "weaponising religion" at Al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, which on the Israeli side had become part of the mainstream. The only true solution for the question of Jerusalem was an end of the occupation, and a "divorce" of both communities in which each respects the attachment of the other to the land and its respective holy sites, safeguarding the latter for religious use. As a specific example of the situation in East Jerusalem the panel highlighted the institutionalised discrimination against Palestinian women by Israeli authorities, which is leading to increased vulnerability in their homes, places of work and public spaces. During the discussion, participants asked that the international community exert pressure on Israel to take measures to deescalate the current situation, and for international support to increase opportunities for Palestinians to seek education abroad. Within the context of the OIC being a co-organiser of the Conference, participants called for a strong show of Islamic solidarity with Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

The second plenary session on "*A new approach for East Jerusalem*" continued to explore the specific impacts of the Israeli occupation on the City's economy, development and social life as well as opportunities for support from both donors and investors. Israeli policy in East Jerusalem was described as consisting of three phases – de-development, integration and gentrification. One of the results was that over 80 per cent of the Palestinian population in the City lived below the poverty line, and that whereas all Christian

holy sites are located in East Jerusalem, only 20 per cent of Christian pilgrims are staying there. Calls went out for a conference to mobilise investment to shore up the Palestinian infrastructure against a "judaization" of East Jerusalem and its change from a multi-cultural site with equal treatment of all religions to a homogenised one, where one national narrative reigns paramount. Speakers highlighted opportunities for outside support and investment and cited specific examples. In this context, the media were asked for a more balanced portrayal of the situation, focusing not only on the dire political situation but also reporting on opportunities for Palestinians and their outside supporters. While Arab donors were reluctant to fund projects in Gaza or the West Bank to avoid the appearance of favouring a particular political faction, everybody could get behind Jerusalem. The recently-agreed United Nations Engagement Strategy in East Jerusalem was focusing on "soft interventions" to restore East Jerusalem as the centre of commercial, religious and cultural life for the Palestinian population and to help reconnect the City with the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, while allowing the population to realize their rights and access essential services. Participants called for strong support to the Palestinian education sector in East Jerusalem as the foundation for a better future and on outside religious authorities not to dissuade Christian and Muslim pilgrims from visiting the City while under occupation, as such bans primarily hurt Palestinian businesses.

During the final plenary session on "*International and regional support for East Jerusalem*", speakers further discussed outside support for the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem. Member states of the OIC are implementing their Strategic Plan for the Development of Jerusalem,

including capacity building programmes for Palestinians from East Jerusalem focusing on specific sectors – e.g. tourism and youth empowerment. Palestinians and their allies could also use international law to advance a solution of the Question of Palestine, including Jerusalem, through requesting the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the continued legality of the occupation. A ruling that the occupation had become illegal would have a strong impact on the political arena. Participants reiterated a growing weariness among Palestinians and their supporters over the perceived inability of the international community to implement United Nations resolutions and enforce international law in regard to the Question of Palestine and the continued Israeli occupation.

The closing session saw statements by the host country and the State of Palestine. Ambassador Abdullayev compared the situation in Palestine with that between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Ambassador Mansour reiterated his Government's determination to achieve a

solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Conference ended with the **issuance of a communiqué** on behalf of the organisers – the Committee and the OIC – strongly condemning the closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque and called upon the international community to reaffirm respect for the historic status quo and to compel Israel to rescind all measures violating it. Further, the organisers reaffirmed the longstanding international condemnation, enshrined in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, of all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and stressed that only an end of the Israeli occupation will pave the way for a just and lasting peace.

*Note: This Summary attempts to provide an overall picture of the deliberations of the Conference. A detailed report, including specific questions that were addressed during the interactive discussions, will be published by the Division for Palestinian Rights in due course.*

## **X. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS STABBING DEATHS OF THREE ISRAELIS**

*On 21 July 2017, the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following statement ([SG/SM/18621](#)):*

The Secretary-General strongly condemns this evening's stabbing attack by a Palestinian perpetrator, which resulted in the death of three members of an Israeli family in the Halamish settlement in the occupied West Bank.

He conveys his condolences to the bereaved and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured.

The Secretary-General again calls on all to refrain from any actions or words that could further escalate an already volatile situation.

## **XI. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL DEPLORES DEATHS OF THREE PALESTINIANS IN CLASHES WITH ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES**

*On 21 July 2017, the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following statement ([SG/SM/18620-PAL/2213](#)):*

The Secretary-General deeply deplores the death of three Palestinians in clashes today with the Israeli security forces and calls for these incidents to be fully investigated. His thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims.

The Secretary-General is concerned by the unfolding violence in the Old City of Jerusalem. He urges Israeli and Palestinian leaders to refrain from actions that could

further escalate the situation and calls on all political, religious and community leaders to help reduce tension.

The Secretary-General reiterates that the sanctity of religious sites should be respected as places for reflection, not violence.

## **XII. QUARTET ENVOYS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY ESCALATING TENSIONS AND VIOLENT CLASHES IN JERUSALEM**

*The following joint [statement](#) was issued on 22 July 2017 by the Quartet envoys.*

“The envoys of the Middle East Quartet from the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations deeply concerned by the escalating tensions and violent clashes taking place in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.

They strongly condemn acts of terror, express their regret for all loss of innocent life caused by the violence, and hope for a speedy recovery to the wounded.

Noting the particular sensitivities surrounding the holy sites in Jerusalem, and the need to ensure security, the Quartet envoys call on all to demonstrate maximum restraint, refrain from provocative actions and work towards de-escalating the situation.

The envoys welcome the assurances by the Prime Minister of Israel that the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem will be upheld and respected.

They encourage Israel and Jordan to work together to uphold the status quo, noting the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom as recognized in its peace treaty with Israel.

The Quartet envoys reiterate that violence deepens mistrust and is fundamentally incompatible with achieving a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

### **XIII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 25 July 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from his briefing ([S/PV.8011](#)):*

As we meet today to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the risks of escalation and violence in the region continue to increase, despite the emergence of newfound agreement among a number of countries of the need to stand united against terrorism and radicalism. As societies continue to fracture along ethnic or religious lines and non-State actors continue to control large swathes of territory, recent events in Jerusalem resonate across the Middle East. For nearly a century, despite myriad peace efforts, one conflict has evaded solution. Some say it is irresolvable. Others challenge the basic premise of international consensus on how it can be resolved. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not only about land and peace; it is about two peoples who both have legitimate national aspirations for statehood and recognition — two nations whose histories are intertwined and whose future is forever intricately linked.

Fortunately until now, Israelis and Palestinians have not succumbed to the torrent of violent upheaval that has engulfed the region in recent years. But half a century of occupation has produced tens of thousands of casualties and left deep psychological scars on both sides. Developments over the past 11 days at the holy sites of the Old City in Jerusalem, however, have demonstrated the grave risk of dangerous escalation that exists, a risk of turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one and dragging both sides into the vortex of violence along with the rest of the region.

On 14 July, two Israeli policemen were killed by three assailants at the Lion’s Gate entrance to the Holy Esplanade. The attackers fled inside the compound before being shot by police. According to the Israeli authorities, the assailants had initiated the attack from within the compound. In the immediate aftermath, the Palestinian President condemned the attack, while the Israeli Prime Minister committed to upholding and respecting the status quo at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem. Citing security concerns, the Israeli authorities closed the compound to all — including, for the first time since 1969, to Muslims for Friday prayers — and restricted entrance to the Old City in order to secure the area of the attack, search for further threats and conduct an investigation.

Two days later, on Sunday, 16 July, the compound was reopened, first for Muslim worshippers and later for visitors, with metal detectors placed outside its entrances. The Islamic Waqf immediately rejected that move as a change in the status quo and called on worshippers not to enter the compound through the metal detectors, but to pray outside the entrance and in the streets of Jerusalem. Palestinian factions also immediately rejected the security measures. Hamas and Islamic Jihad issued a joint statement warning that that was a red line that would lead to an escalation, and Fatah called for “a day of rage”.

Starting on 16 July, prayers and peaceful protests were conducted at the Lion’s Gate, followed by clashes with the Israeli police. Tensions rose by Friday, 21 July, as the

Waqf announced the closure of all Jerusalem mosques for Friday prayers. In response, Israel announced a restriction of entry into the Old City for all Muslim men under the age of 50. Clashes that evening and the next turned fatal, with four Palestinian protesters killed and hundreds injured. Later on Friday, three Israelis were killed in a brutal terror attack at their home in the West Bank settlement of Halamish by a 19-year-old Palestinian assailant who in his last will made a clear connection between his act and the events in East Jerusalem. Overall, in clashes since 14 July, at least four Palestinians were killed and more than 300 have been injured.

I ask Member States today to unequivocally condemn the violence of the past few days. Our thoughts and prayers must go out to all the victims and their families.

On 21 July, President Abbas announced that the Palestinian Authority was freezing all contact with Israel, including high-level security coordination.

Let us make no mistake: while events in Jerusalem may be taking place over a couple of hundred square metres in the Old City, they affect hundreds of millions of people around the world. Therefore, I welcome last night's decision by the Israeli security Cabinet to remove the metal detectors, while ensuring the security of visitors and worshippers to the holy sites. I hope that the Cabinet decision will lead to a calming of the current tensions and will enable a return of worshippers to the Holy Esplanade. It is expected that President Abbas will convene the Palestinian leadership later tonight to discuss those developments.

As we have seen over the past 11 days, it is vital that the status quo established since 1967 be preserved. Recognizing the special

and historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom, I encourage Israel to continue its intensive contacts with Jordan. All parties must refrain from provocative actions, show restraint and bring a conclusive end to this crisis in the next few days. In those efforts, constant discussion with the Islamic religious authorities in Jerusalem and the Palestinian leadership can greatly contribute to maintaining calm in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank.

As this crisis has unfolded, I want to reflect briefly on the views we hear from residents in East Jerusalem — people who have been caught in the midst of these events over the past few weeks. They often tell us that for many years they have felt that their religious and ethnic identity is under threat; that their very livelihoods in their own city are at risk while living under occupation; and that their children often live in fear of security operations and house demolitions. They want to pray in peace and live in security and freedom. Many of them feel alone. They talk of the special status that resolution 181 (1947) had bestowed on Jerusalem, yet they see the reality around them. That is why often they come to us, the United Nations, appealing for protection. It is critical that any decision made at the highest political and religious levels, if it is to be sustainable, take into consideration the fears and hopes of the people on the ground.

Jerusalem remains a final-status issue that needs to be decided and negotiated between the two sides.

As the occupying Power, Israel has a responsibility to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and must show maximum restraint in order to avoid further loss of life and an escalation of the situation.

At the same time, Palestinian leaders have a responsibility to avoid provocative statements that further aggravate an already tense environment. In that respect, I am particularly concerned about statements made over the past weeks by some factions that have sought to fan the flames of violence. Such provocations are dangerous, and I call on all to condemn them.

This crisis has diverted us from the real tasks ahead, namely, how to restore a political process in order to find a solution that meets the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians — a solution that is based on United Nations resolutions and is achieved through negotiations; a solution whose ultimate goal is two States living side by side in peace and security.

Unfortunately, these latest incidents have taken place against a backdrop of other developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In July alone, plans were advanced for more than 2,300 housing units in East Jerusalem, which is 30 per cent more than were advanced during all of 2016. That includes plans for approximately 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements in north of East Jerusalem, as well as plans in Sheikh Jarrah, which may involve the demolition of Palestinian houses. I must once again emphasize that settlement activity in occupied territory is illegal under international law and undermines the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestine.

On a more positive note, some constructive steps have been taken that are in line with the recommendations of the report of the Middle East Quartet (S/2016/595, annex).

On 10 July, an interim power-purchasing agreement was signed, energizing the first

Palestinian-owned and operated substation in Jenin. That will increase electricity supply in the northern West Bank and help the Palestinian Authority take control of the energy sector. Both sides should now move to negotiate a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian power-purchasing agreement that would be a landmark achievement towards Palestine's energy independence.

On 13 July, with United States facilitation, the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Government reached an agreement allowing for an increase in water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Under its terms, the Palestinian Authority will purchase some 32 million cubic meters of water from Israel — 22 million cubic meters for the West Bank and 10 million for Gaza. The water will come from a desalination plant to be constructed in Aqaba, Jordan. The implementation of such agreements is instrumental in rebuilding trust between Palestinians and Israelis. They are, however, all put at risk by the freezing of contacts between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Without a resolution to the current crisis, these hard-won gains will swiftly evaporate.

I now turn to the situation in Gaza with a heavy heart. Some 2 million people there have been taken hostage in the political standoff between Fatah and Hamas. The humanitarian impact of the punishing measures taken against Gaza is appalling. In some parts of Gaza, people have experienced electricity cuts of 36 hours. No electricity means no drinking water. Hospitals are struggling to survive. An environmental crisis is in the making. Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should be paying the price.

I want to assure the Security Council that the United Nations will not give up on

Gaza and its people. Despite the odds, we will continue our intense mediation efforts to resolve the standoff. I take this opportunity to thank Egypt for stepping in at a moment of need and facilitating the entry of badly needed fuel to increase electricity supply. Egyptian fuel, along with the nearly 900,000 liters of fuel per month provided by the United Nations for the most essential services, provide a temporary lifeline to the residents of Gaza. In this environment, the continued functioning of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism is more critical than ever to the people of Gaza. Recently, too, the State of Qatar has signed contracts for eight more residential buildings as part of its commitment to reconstruction.

Today, Gaza and the West Bank are further apart than ever. Palestinian leaders must make some hard choices about the future of their people. They can work to overcome their ideological divisions or they can continue along the path that will guarantee Gaza's complete collapse. They can work to unite Palestinians in pursuit of the goal of statehood or they can oversee the demise of the Palestinian national project. They can resolve the current crisis in Gaza or preside over the radicalization of their population and see it fall into the hands of extremists with ever more destructive agendas.

I know that this is not the future that President Abbas or the majority of Palestinians want for their country. I know that they want to build a State in which human rights are respected; a State that is achieved on the basis of negotiations, not violence; one that lives in peace and security with the State of Israel. For 10 years, however, the population in Gaza has lived in a state of chronic vulnerability. At what point will people say "enough is enough"? At what point will we say "enough is enough"?

Since violently seizing control of Gaza, Hamas has tightened its grip on power and suppressed dissent. The fact that no presidential or legislative elections have been held in Palestine since 2006 has also created a democratic deficit that undermines the legitimacy of institutions. Two different legal systems have emerged and diverging laws have been enacted in Gaza and the West Bank.

I once again call on all Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the split. I encourage them to reach an agreement that would allow the legitimate Palestinian Government to take up its responsibilities in Gaza as a step towards the formation of a unity Government on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform, and agree to hold elections. Meanwhile, Hamas must ensure that calm is maintained by ceasing militant build-up against Israel and by maintaining security at the border of Egypt. At the same time, I encourage Israel to step up its measures to lift the closures and facilitate development in Gaza as overall calm persists in the Strip, in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

...

In closing, let me emphasize that the events we have witnessed over the past weeks in Jerusalem are a reminder of how easy it is to reach the precipice of a dangerous escalation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. We are not over the crisis yet, but I hope that the steps that have been taken by Israel will enable a return to relative calm in the next couple of days. I hope that as agreements between Israel and Jordan are implemented and a positive engagement with the religious authorities takes place, we will avoid a cycle of violence that would destroy all peace efforts for the foreseeable future.

We must not lose focus on the need to restore a political perspective or on the need to bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive to

negotiations on a final status arrangement and avoids turning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one.

#### **XIV. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WELCOMES NEWS THAT CRISIS IN THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM HAS BEEN DEFUSED**

*On 27 July 2017, the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued the following statement ([SG/SM/18628](#)):*

The Secretary-General welcomes the news that the crisis in the Old City of Jerusalem has been defused, in line with the status quo at the holy sites before 14 July. He hopes that the dialogue will continue and

contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust amongst the communities. The Secretary-General will remain engaged with all stakeholders to this effect.

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