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# Security Council

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## Implementation of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is the eighteenth quarterly report on the implementation of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). The reporting period is from 23 March to 11 June.

#### II. Settlement activities

2. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. In the same resolution, the Council reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in that regard. No such steps were taken during the reporting period.

3. On 20 May, the Jerusalem District Planning Committee approved the Har Homa E plan for 540 additional housing units in occupied East Jerusalem. The issuance of building permits for the plan is contingent on several conditions. The plan, if implemented, would serve as another step towards connecting the existing Gilo and Har Homa settlements and create a contiguous built-up area of Israeli settlements along the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem. It would also separate Bethlehem and the southern West Bank from East Jerusalem. In early May, settlers established a new outpost, called Eviatar, south of Nablus. In early June, the Israel Defense Forces issued demolition orders for structures housing some 50 Palestinian families in Eviatar and issued a military order banning further construction at the site and its complete evacuation by 14 June.

4. During the reporting period, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which remain almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced people to demolish 72 structures, resulting in the displacement of 78 people, including 47 children and some 15 women, and leaving 357 others affected.



5. A total of 53 per cent of the structures were demolished (3) or seized (35) without, or with very short, prior notice on the basis of military regulations allowing the summary requisition of “newly installed” structures defined as “movable” or suspected to be used to commit a criminal offence. Three structures were demolished on the basis of military order No. 1797, which authorizes an expedited process giving owners only 96 hours to demonstrate that they possess a valid building permit. Another six structures were demolished by their owners following receipt of demolition orders. A total of 14 structures demolished or seized were donor-funded.

6. Overall, in occupied East Jerusalem, at least 218 Palestinian households, comprising 970 people, including 424 children, have eviction cases currently pending in Israeli courts. Most of the cases were initiated by Israeli settler organizations and are based on the application of Israeli laws that allow for properties in East Jerusalem that were owned by Jews prior to 1948 to be reclaimed. No similar law allows Palestinians to reclaim their property in Israel.

7. In the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Shaykh Jarrah, on 10 February and 2 March, the Jerusalem District Court rejected appeals against cases brought by settler organizations to evict 15 Palestinian families from the neighbourhood, where they had lived for decades. A request for an appeal by the Palestinian families was made to the Supreme Court. Following a request by the Attorney General of Israel, on 9 May, the Court postponed by a month a hearing on the matter. On 25 May, the Supreme Court gave the Attorney General until 8 June to provide a position on the case. On 7 June, the Attorney General announced that he would not intervene in the Supreme Court’s proceedings with respect to the pending eviction of four of the families. The Supreme Court announced that it would schedule a hearing before 20 July on the families’ request for an appeal and issue a ruling accordingly.

8. On 28 May, the Jerusalem District Court postponed until December its decision on an appeal against an eviction order related to two residential buildings, comprising three apartments, in the Batan al-Hawa neighbourhood of Silwan, in East Jerusalem. In its decision, the Court noted that it would wait for the High Court of Justice to issue a decision in similar cases. The Attorney General’s position has also been requested by the High Court of Justice. If the eviction were to proceed, a total of seven Palestinian families, comprising 33 persons, including 19 children, 2 elderly women and 1 man with special needs, would be directly affected. On 10 June, the Jerusalem District Court postponed until 8 July its decision on an appeal against another eviction order related to two residential buildings, comprising three apartments, in Batan al-Hawa. If the eviction were to proceed, a total of three Palestinian families, comprising 20 persons, including 12 children, would be directly affected.

### **III. Violence against civilians, including acts of terror**

9. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, called for accountability in that regard and called for compliance with obligations under international law for the strengthening of ongoing efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination, and to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism.

10. The reporting period was marked by increased violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, settler-related violence, alleged and attempted attacks, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails by Palestinians, the firing of rockets by Palestinian armed

groups from Gaza towards Israel, Israeli air strikes and shelling against targets in Gaza and the use of lethal force by Israeli security forces against Palestinians.

11. Overall, and throughout the reporting period, 295 Palestinians, including 42 women and 73 children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, search-and-arrest operations, air strikes and shelling and other incidents across the occupied Palestinian territory, and 10,149 Palestinians, including 17 women and 148 children, were injured, 4,703 by tear gas and 840 by live ammunition. In all, 90 members of Israeli security forces and 857 Israeli civilians were injured by Palestinians in clashes, as well as by the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, indiscriminate rocket and mortar fire and other incidents.

12. Tensions were high in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, throughout the reporting period. The Israeli authorities' planned eviction of four extended Palestine refugee families from their homes in the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood heightened tensions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, resulting in increasingly tense protests beginning in April. In early April, videos went viral on social media depicting violent attacks by Palestinians against ultra-Orthodox Jews and attacks against Palestinians by extreme right-wing groups. Following the start of Ramadan, on 13 April, there was a marked increase in unrest after Israeli authorities installed metal barriers outside the Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, blocking access to a public area used by Palestinians. Following the installation, widespread protests and violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces occurred in occupied East Jerusalem, in particular in the vicinity of the Aqsa Mosque and the Damascus Gate, as well as in Shaykh Jarrah.

13. The unrest increased further on 22 April, when Israeli civilians marched towards the Damascus Gate, chanting "Death to Arabs" and other anti-Arab slogans and clashed with Palestinians, who were also chanting inflammatory rhetoric, before both groups were dispersed by Israeli security forces. The removal by those forces of the barriers, on 25 April, temporarily restored a relative calm to the area. Beginning on 28 April, Palestinians held daily protests in the Shaykh Jarrah area, which, combined with a continued heavy presence of Israeli security forces and provocation by Israeli civilians, triggered repeated clashes throughout East Jerusalem.

14. While full details remain unclear, the situation in occupied East Jerusalem escalated further on Jerusalem Day, 10 May, when Israeli security forces entered the Aqsa Mosque compound, launching stun grenades, using tear gas and firing rubber-coated metal bullets. Israeli authorities took steps to reduce tensions, including rerouting a scheduled demonstration, organized by right-wing Israeli activists to mark Jerusalem Day, away from the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, postponing a Supreme Court hearing on the Shaykh Jarrah evictions and barring Jewish visits to the holy sites. Nevertheless, the violence and heavy security presence continued within the Old City. During the reporting period, 2 Palestinians were killed and 1,635 were injured in East Jerusalem – including 657 on 10 May alone – while 99 Israelis were injured, 32 of them on 10 May.

15. Against the backdrop of tensions in Jerusalem, violence erupted between Israel and Palestinian armed groups based in the Gaza Strip, leading to the worst escalation of armed hostilities since 2014. On 10 May, late in the afternoon, a spokesperson for the Hamas Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades published a statement giving Israel "an ultimatum until six in the evening today to withdraw its forces from the blessed Al Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and release all detainees from the recent events in Jerusalem". That evening, Palestinian armed groups indiscriminately fired 191 rockets and mortars towards Israel, including some aimed at Jerusalem, to which the Israel Defense Forces responded with 60 missiles and shells, hitting Gaza. For the next 10 days, Israel continued intensive air strikes and shelling, reportedly

targeting armed groups and their infrastructure, while Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continued to launch rockets and mortars at an unprecedented scale towards Israel, including from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods. The inner compound yard of one United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school was struck by two Israeli missiles despite the school being designated as an emergency shelter for civilians during the hostilities. In the context of a subsequent investigation into how to secure the building from the missiles, UNRWA discovered the existence of a possible tunnel under the school for potential use by Palestinian armed groups. There is no indication of the existence of any entry or exit points for the tunnel within the premises.

16. In total, Palestinian armed groups fired over 4,000 rockets and projectiles towards Israel, with over 600 falling within the Gaza Strip, reportedly accounting for some Palestinian casualties. According to Israeli sources, Israeli forces carried out over 1,500 strikes from air, land and sea across the Gaza Strip. Israeli air strikes and shelling, directed at what Israel said were targets containing militant installations, caused extensive damage to civilian property and infrastructure, including public buildings, residential homes and commercial units, including four high-rise towers, – one of which hosted international media outlets – humanitarian organizations, medical facilities and roads. Rockets from Gaza reached as far as the outskirts of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and its suburbs and Ben Gurion Airport. The rockets struck multiple locations, causing damage to residential and commercial property, as well as to schools and a crude oil pipeline.

17. Throughout the hostilities, the United Nations worked with all sides to restore calm, de-escalate the situation and prevent any further loss of life. The escalation continued until both sides announced a cessation of hostilities, which began at 2 a.m. on 21 May. The cessation has continued to hold, with no further rocket firing or air strikes reported.

18. The armed hostilities took a severe toll on the civilian population. Between 10 and 21 May, 259 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including 66 children and 41 women (4 of whom were pregnant), with 248 of them, including 63 children, killed in air strikes and by falling rockets. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 1,948 Palestinians were injured. At least 129 of those killed were civilians. In some cases, families, including women, children and infants, were killed in their homes by Israeli air strikes. Over 40 people are estimated to have been killed in a series of air strikes reportedly targeting tunnels under residential areas in Gaza City overnight on 15 May, with many people still unaccounted for. The fatalities included the head of internal medicine at Al-Shifa Hospital, the main hospital in the Gaza Strip, and one of Gaza's few neurologists, as well as members of their families, and nine members of a family – two women and seven children – from the Al-Shati refugee camp.

19. In Israel, a 5-year-old boy was killed by a rocket in Sderot, and a 16-year-old girl and her father were killed in Lod. Throughout the 11 days of hostilities, hundreds of thousands of Israelis across much of the south and centre of the country repeatedly had to run for shelter amidst rocket barrages. Nine Israelis, including two children, four women and one soldier, and three foreign nationals were killed and hundreds of Israelis were injured during the hostilities. In addition, incendiary balloons and kites launched from Gaza sparked dozens of fires in southern Israel during the period.

20. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 39 Palestinians, including 2 women and 7 children, were killed. A total of 8,217 Palestinians were injured, 4,703 of them from tear gas inhalation. Most of the fatalities resulted from the use by Israeli security forces of live ammunition in the context of demonstrations or clashes or in response to attacks or attempted attacks. In all, 1 Israeli was killed and 137 were injured, including 90 members of Israeli security forces. The number of incidents in

the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, increased during the reporting period, in particular during the period of escalation, from 10 to 21 May.

21. On 6 April, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian man at an ad hoc checkpoint in Bi'r Nabala village, north of Jerusalem. The man died of his injuries, and his wife, also in the vehicle, was injured. Israeli security forces initially said that the man had attempted a ramming attack, an account disputed by the man's wife and eyewitnesses. Israeli security forces launched an investigation into the incident.

22. On 3 May, a Palestinian killed an Israeli man and injured two others in a drive-by shooting attack at Za'atara checkpoint, south of Nablus. On 5 May, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy was killed as a result of Israeli forces shooting him in the back under disputed circumstances during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the village of Udalah, south of Nablus.

23. On 7 May, Israeli forces shot and killed two Palestinian men and seriously injured a third near Salem checkpoint, north-west of Janin, after the men, travelling on a bus into Israel, reportedly opened fire at border police.

24. On 11 May, Israeli forces shot and killed one Palestinian man and seriously injured another at Za'atara checkpoint, under unclear circumstances. On 12 May, a Palestinian man was reportedly shot and killed by Israeli security forces during clashes in Fawwar refugee camp, south of Hebron. Israeli security forces prevented Palestinian ambulances from reaching the man.

25. On 12 May, during clashes in Aqqaba, in Tubas, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 16-year-old boy in the back with two live bullets. Reportedly, the incident occurred in the context of Israeli security forces withdrawing from clashes in Tubas, where they shot and injured two Palestinians with live ammunition and where two additional Palestinians were injured as a result of being rammed by a military jeep.

26. On 14 May, Palestinians held solidarity protests in support of Gaza, many of which escalated into clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in Qalqilyah, Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and dozens of other locations. In the deadliest day in the occupied West Bank in over a decade, 10 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in such demonstrations and clashes and about 250 were injured by live bullets, raising concerns over excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. Another Palestinian was killed near Ofra settlement in an alleged ramming and stabbing attack against Israeli security forces.

27. On 15 and 16 May, two Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli security forces in separate ramming and alleged ramming attacks against those forces in Shaykh Jarrah and in the southern West Bank, respectively. In the southern West Bank, seven Israeli border police officers were injured, two moderately. On 16 May, three Palestinians were killed by the live ammunition of Israeli security forces during demonstrations and clashes in Tulkarm, Nablus and Hebron, including a 14-year-old boy, who died of his injuries after being shot in the head by those forces in Hebron on 13 May.

28. On 18 May, a Palestinian man armed with a submachine gun was shot dead by Israeli security forces in Hebron as he reportedly attempted to throw a pipe bomb. On the same day, Israeli security forces killed two Palestinian men during demonstrations and clashes in Ramallah, as well as a 16-year-old boy in the village of Bil'in. A fourth Palestinian man, who was shot in the head during demonstrations and clashes in Janin on 18 May, later died of his wounds.

29. On 25 May, Israeli special forces killed with live ammunition a Palestinian from al-Am'ari refugee camp who was sitting in his car in the Umm al-Sharayet neighbourhood of Ramallah. The shooting occurred in the context of an arrest operation in search of the man's family member in what appears to be a case of

mistaken identity. On 28 May, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 28-year-old Palestinian man and injured at least 24 others during protests against the establishment of a new settler outpost in Jabal Sbeih, in Bayta, south-east of Nablus.

30. Across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, there was an escalation in the severity of settler-related violence, including the use of firearms. A total of 139 attacks were recorded in which Israeli settlers or other civilians injured Palestinians or reportedly damaged their property. The attacks resulted in the killing of one Palestinian and the injury of 51, as well as in damage to Palestinian-owned properties, compared with two fatalities and 31 injuries in the first quarter of 2021. According to Israeli sources, Palestinians perpetrated 228 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the occupied West Bank, including the throwing of stones, Molotov cocktails and pipe bombs at civilian vehicles, resulting in 47 injuries and damage to property.

31. During the reporting period, Israeli security forces conducted 805 search-and-arrest operations, resulting in the arrest of 851 people, including 31 children, the killing of two Palestinians, including a child, and the injury of 98 people during subsequent clashes. Of these, 130 took place in East Jerusalem against a backdrop of heightened tensions.

#### **IV. Incitement, provocations and inflammatory rhetoric**

32. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council called upon both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, with the aim, inter alia, of de-escalating the situation on the ground, rebuilding trust and confidence, demonstrating through policies and actions a genuine commitment to the two-State solution and creating the conditions necessary for promoting peace.

33. There was a serious escalation in the instances of incitement and inflammatory rhetoric throughout the reporting period, many of which drove or exacerbated the ongoing violence. In the lead-up to the outbreak of hostilities in Gaza, and throughout the escalation, Hamas leaders repeatedly called for violence against Israelis and issued threats. One Hamas official called upon Palestinians living in Jerusalem to “cut off the heads of the Jews with knives”, explaining how to do so most effectively. The official social media pages of Fatah repeatedly conveyed calls from the group’s national and local leadership to engage in confrontations with Israeli soldiers and settlers, in some cases urging the use of “all means possible”. In an interview, a senior Fatah official addressed “every Palestinian who has a stone or a word or a bullet”, saying that the “battle has opened”. In sermons broadcast on the official Palestinian television channel, some Palestinian Authority religious officials claimed that Israel was seeking to destroy the Aqsa Mosque and “defiling” it.

34. At the same time, Israeli officials incited violence and engaged in a series of provocative steps and statements. During demonstrations in Shaykh Jarrah, a Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem was filmed telling a Palestinian activist that it was “a pity” that he wasn’t shot in the head. Far right members of the Knesset repeatedly organized provocative visits to flashpoints in Jerusalem, including the neighbourhood of Shaykh Jarrah, the Damascus Gate and the entrance to the Holy Esplanade, sparking violent clashes between their supporters and Palestinians. In a social media post, an Israeli Minister wrote, following the death of an Israeli soldier, that the “Palestinian enemy is raising its head. Like in the past 100 years, [they are] barbarians and savages”. Reacting to a video of Palestinians attacking an Israeli driver near the Old City, a member of the Knesset wrote on social media that Israel had lost control of its

sovereignty over Jerusalem and that “the time has come to reliberate the Temple Mount and Jerusalem and show [Palestinians] who is in charge once and for all”. Members of the Knesset made derogatory and unacceptable statements against Arabs, with one tweeting that, “in the long run”, Arabs who don’t accept that “the Land of Israel belongs to the People of Israel ... won’t stay here”. Another wrote, in response to footage of Palestinians in East Jerusalem cheering rocket strikes on the city, that they should be “put on trucks and deported immediately”.

## V. Affirmative steps to reverse negative trends

35. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council called for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that were imperilling the two-State solution. Negative trends on the ground continued during the reporting period.

36. On 30 April, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, said that he was indefinitely postponing Palestinian Legislative Council, presidential and Palestinian National Council elections scheduled for 2021 until the participation of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem was guaranteed by Israel. Preparations for Palestinian Legislative Council elections, scheduled for 22 May, were well advanced. Some 93 per cent of eligible voters had registered to participate, amounting to over 2.5 million Palestinians, some 50 per cent of whom were women, and more than 40 per cent would have been first-time voters. Thirty-six candidate lists, comprising a total of 1,389 candidates, had been cleared to participate by the Central Elections Commission, and the campaign period was set to begin on 1 May.

37. In Gaza, extensive damage was inflicted on residential and commercial buildings, health facilities, schools and infrastructure, including roads, electricity feeder lines and networks, wastewater networks and pumping stations, pipelines, water wells and agricultural land. Gaza has been contaminated by a significant amount of undetonated explosive remnants of war, necessitating life-saving mine action interventions and the urgent education of civilians on the risks of such remnants. On 9 June, an explosive accident killed a 9-year-old boy and severely injured his brother. In the context of the recent escalation, a United Nations risk assessment confirmed the presence of 14 deep-buried bombs, including 2 below an UNRWA school.

38. Initial estimates by local authorities reported the total destruction of 2,000 housing units and damage to 15,000 others. Over 113,000 Palestinians were temporarily displaced in UNRWA schools or with host families during the hostilities, heightening the risk of the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) owing to overcrowding, with some 8,500 Palestinians seeking shelter with host families or in two UNRWA schools as at 10 June. Approximately 600 families (3,600 individuals) have remained internally displaced for more than six years, since the 2014 conflict.

39. Damage was also inflicted on 141 schools and 33 health facilities.

40. The electricity supply across the Gaza Strip was further reduced, from an average of 15 hours per day to 5 to 6 hours per day, owing to damage to key electricity feeder lines, transformers and networks, as well as to Israel barring entry for fuel delivered through the United Nations for the Gaza power plant, causing disruptions to the provision of basic services, including water, sanitation and health care. About 800,000 people temporarily lacked regular access to safe piped water as a result of damage to infrastructure and the reduced electricity supply. During the reporting period, the key electricity feeder lines were repaired, partially restoring electricity, and significant repairs to water infrastructure were completed.



41. On 11 May, following the commencement of hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, Israel closed the Erez Crossing, including to movement of humanitarian cases and personnel, and the Kerem Shalom Crossing for goods. However, on 18 May, Kerem Shalom was reopened for fuel for UNRWA and animal feed only, following its early closure owing to mortar fire from Gaza. Erez was opened exceptionally for one day, on 17 May, for the entry of a shipment from Jordan of medical aid, along with medical personnel. The closure of crossing points from Israel throughout the period of hostilities, combined with the effects of the damage sustained by electricity infrastructure in Gaza, aggravated the humanitarian situation and affected the well-being of the entire Gaza population.

42. The Rafah Crossing remained open, except during public holidays. The Salah al-Din Gate opened on five days during the hostilities to allow for the entry of commercial goods, including fuel. On 9 May, Israel sealed off the Gaza fishing zone, which was restored to six miles on 25 May. It had already closed the fishing zone completely for three days, from 26 to 28 April, in response to the firing of rockets and incendiary balloons towards Israel.

43. Following the cessation of hostilities, on 21 May, 40 truckloads of humanitarian supplies were permitted entry. On 25 May, Israel announced the opening of the crossings for certain humanitarian goods and personnel. Israel has facilitated the entry of over 46,000 COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) vaccines.

## **VI. Efforts by the parties and the international community to advance the peace process, and other relevant developments**

44. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council called upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

45. In its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council also called upon all parties to continue, in the interest of the promotion of peace and security, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process and urged in that regard the intensification and acceleration of international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map, and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. The Council underlined that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations.

46. On 23 April and 16 and 28 May, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met virtually to discuss the latest political developments and the situation on the ground, including the latest escalation and cessation of hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups.

47. During the escalation between Israel and armed groups in Gaza, the Security Council met, on 10, 12, 16 and 18 May, to express its deep concern over the ongoing violence and encourage the parties to end the hostilities. On 20 May, the General Assembly held an urgent meeting to address the situation, during which the Secretary-General reiterated his call to all sides for an immediate ceasefire. On 22 May, the Security Council issued a statement welcoming the announcement of a ceasefire and stressing the immediate need for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular in Gaza. On 27 May, the Human Rights Council decided to establish an ongoing commission of inquiry into alleged violations of international

humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel leading up to and since 13 April 2021.

## VII. Observations

48. I remain deeply troubled by the continued illegal settlement expansion of Israel in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which further entrenches the Israeli occupation, undermines the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty, continues to encroach on Palestinian land and natural resources, hampers the free movement of the Palestinian population and increases the risks of violent confrontation. Israeli authorities continue to advance settlement plans that had been frozen or delayed for years, located in areas crucial for the contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

49. The advancement of expansion plans for the Har Homa settlement in occupied East Jerusalem is a particularly concerning example. It is yet another step on the road to consolidate the continuum of illegal settlements along the southern perimeter separating East Jerusalem from Bethlehem and other Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank to its south.

50. Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law. They undermine the prospect of achieving a two-State solution by systematically eroding the possibility of establishing a contiguous, independent and viable sovereign Palestinian State. I urge the Government of Israel to cease the advancement of all settlement activity immediately.

51. I remain deeply concerned by the continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian structures, which have included internationally funded humanitarian projects. I call upon the Israeli authorities to end the demolition of Palestinian property and the forcible displacement and eviction of Palestinians, in line with the country's obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law, and to approve plans that would enable these communities to build legally and address their development needs.

52. I remain deeply disturbed by the possible forced evictions of some Palestinian families from their homes in the Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem. As demonstrated in recent weeks, such forced evictions, in particular in such politically sensitive areas, can trigger dangerous tensions and violence.

53. The rapid escalation of violence, violent attacks against Palestinian and Israeli civilians and incitement to violence spiralled quickly out of control and into a devastating exchange between Israel and armed groups in Gaza at a scale not seen in years. The events have only deepened the divisions between Israelis and Palestinians and made progress towards peace an even greater challenge. The violence must stop, and all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable.

54. I am deeply concerned by the multiple instances in which officials exacerbated the tensions and violence through unacceptable rhetoric or provocative actions. The statements and actions contributed to the deadly escalation. Violence and incitement must be clearly condemned and unequivocally rejected by all. Instead, on too many occasions, they were encouraged and amplified. At the same time, I commend initiatives led by civil society organizations to call for peace, reconciliation and an end to the fighting.

55. The indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian population centres, including from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods, by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad or others constitutes a clear violation of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law and must cease. Although Israel took a number of precautions, such as advance warning of attacks in some cases, air strikes in densely populated areas resulted in a high level of civilian fatalities and injuries, as well as the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. Israeli authorities must abide by the rules of international humanitarian law governing armed conflict and take all feasible precautions to spare civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of military operations.

56. I am appalled in particular that children continue to be victims of violence. Sixty-six children in Gaza, six children in the occupied West Bank and two children in Israel were killed as a result of the recent hostilities. I reiterate that children should not be the target of violence or put in harm's way. They should be afforded special protection from any form of violence.

57. There are serious concerns that Israeli security forces used disproportionate force against those participating in demonstrations, in particular through the use of live ammunition. I reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Israeli and Palestinian authorities must carry out thorough, independent, impartial and prompt investigations into all instances of possible excessive use of force.

58. I am deeply concerned by the continued settler-related violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I am especially troubled by the increasing severity of settler attacks, including reports that Israeli settlers are using live ammunition against Palestinians. Israel, as the occupying power, has an obligation to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian population and to investigate such attacks. I am also deeply concerned by attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians. Perpetrators of violence on all sides must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice.

59. I would like to reiterate that the fate of two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two Israel Defense Forces soldiers held by Hamas in Gaza remains an important humanitarian concern. I call upon Hamas to provide information on their status, as required by international humanitarian law.

60. I also remain deeply concerned by the continued Israeli practice of holding the bodies of killed Palestinians. I call upon Israel to return withheld bodies to their families, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

61. I welcome the cessation of hostilities agreed on 21 May and recognize the important efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States of America to support ending the violence. I also wish to thank my Special Coordinator for his efforts. Nevertheless, the situation in Gaza remains deeply worrying, including the severe emotional trauma and suffering experienced by its people after years of prolonged Israeli closures and severe economic and movement restrictions, the nature of Hamas rule and the ongoing threat of violence. Although a cessation of hostilities continues to hold, it is fragile, and the risk of a major escalation is ever-present. The devastating events of the past few weeks are a stark reminder that this conflict cannot be perpetually managed. I reiterate that no amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will address the challenges in Gaza, which ultimately require political solutions and the political will to pursue them.

62. In the immediate period, maintaining the calm, stabilizing the cessation of hostilities and taking steps to urgently address humanitarian needs are crucial priorities. I appeal to the international community to work with the United Nations to

develop an integrated, robust package of support for swift, sustainable reconstruction and recovery that supports the Palestinian people and strengthens their institutions. I am committed to ensuring that the United Nations plays its part.

63. The United Nations is coordinating the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza, and I highlight the \$95 million humanitarian flash appeal launched on 27 May. The United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union are also working on a rapid damage needs assessment in which the longer-term reconstruction and recovery needs in Gaza will be estimated. For humanitarian relief to be delivered to Gaza rapidly, immediate funding for health, protection, education, food, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene is required. All parties must also facilitate unimpeded access to humanitarian relief. Israel must fast-track the entry of goods for humanitarian response and reconstruction and the passage of essential humanitarian and reconstruction personnel, including Palestinian nationals. Israel must also increase significantly the number of Gaza exit permits issued for patients to receive life-saving cancer treatments and other interventions.

64. I remain extremely concerned by the UNRWA \$150 million programme budget shortfall. I welcome the resumption of funding from the United States last April and call upon Member States to ensure that the organization has the liquidity over the summer to conduct operations. UNRWA is vital to the region's stability, in particular in the aftermath of a devastating conflict and while the region continues to be volatile. I welcome efforts by Jordan and Sweden to organize an international conference on UNRWA in October. Investing in UNRWA remains an indispensable investment in regional stability and support for the goal of Middle East peace.

65. It is critical that the important Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts continue. The United Nations stands firm in its support of the efforts by Egypt in this regard, and I call upon all Palestinian factions to make serious efforts to ensure the reunification of Gaza and the occupied West Bank under a single, democratic, national Government. Gaza is, and must remain, an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution.

66. The postponement of the Palestinian election process has had significant implications, both for the security situation on the ground and the future of the Palestinian national project. I commend the tireless efforts of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, which, throughout the process, ensured that all the technical aspects were effectively implemented. The holding of elections in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza would be a crucial step towards Palestinian unity, giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions, including a democratically elected Parliament and Government in Palestine.

67. The pull of short-term fixes must be avoided, and the focus must be on working towards advancing intra-Palestinian unity, lifting the debilitating closures in Gaza, in line with Security Council resolution [1860 \(2009\)](#), and, ultimately, returning to a peace process that will end the occupation and create a viable two-State solution.

68. I remain committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States – Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State – living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

69. I urge Israelis, Palestinians, regional States and the broader international community to take practical steps that will enable the parties to re-engage on the path towards meaningful negotiations and, ultimately, peace. The Special Coordinator is

actively engaged in advancing these efforts with his counterparts in the Middle East Quartet, key regional partners and Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

70. I express my deep appreciation to Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his outstanding service in what remains a challenging context. I also pay tribute to all United Nations personnel working under difficult circumstances in the service of the Organization.

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