

*Permanent Observer Mission
of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

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31 May 2024

Excellency,

As Israel, the occupying Power, carries on unabated with its **genocidal assault on the Palestinian civilian population and all semblance of life in the Gaza Strip**, including in **Rafah**, where its tanks and soldiers have reached the center of the city, it also carries on unabated with attacks on the United Nations and specifically on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Israel's attacks on UNRWA are clearly **aimed at destroying it, part and parcel of the sinister, systematic attempts to cause irreparable harm to the Palestinian people**, including the Palestine refugees.

The **harassment, incitement, threats and direct Israeli attacks on UNRWA** have escalated in intensity and frequency as the international community, including the **Security Council, has failed to impose consequences for such blatant attacks on a UN agency** by a Member State of the organization.

Israel has launched **repeated strikes on UNRWA facilities** sheltering forcibly displaced families in Gaza. At least **450 Palestinian children, women and men have been killed and 1,476 injured** in these attacks. **170 UNRWA facilities have been damaged or destroyed** by the Israeli occupying forces (IOF), with some schools demolished in their entirety.

192 UNRWA staff members have been killed in Israeli bombardments in Gaza, the **highest number of UN staff killed in the organization's history**. UNRWA staff have also been detained by Israel and subjected to physical and psychological ill-treatment, including torture.

The **UNRWA compound in occupied East Jerusalem has been targeted by arson attacks** and violent demonstrations by Israeli extremists and settlers, including children chanting **"Let the UN burn"**.

Israel has **obstructed UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini from entering Gaza** and is **restricting the visas** of international staff and access of Palestinian staff throughout the West Bank and particularly into occupied East Jerusalem.

This is all **part of an official Israeli government campaign to undermine UNRWA**, including via allegations against 19 staff members in Gaza (out of 13,000 staff), which remain unproven and on which there is an ongoing independent UN investigation, and other **attempts to smear UNRWA and its staff with the clear aim of discrediting, defunding and bringing it to collapse**. This includes a **Knesset bill to designate UNRWA as a "terrorist organization"** and another **bill stripping it of the immunities** accorded to all UN entities operating anywhere in the world. Israel is attempting to not only prohibit UNRWA operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, but to **criminalize the Agency, its operations and staff members**, further endangering their safety and impeding its lifesaving humanitarian mission.

H.E. Mr. Pedro Comissário Afonso
The President of the Security Council of the United Nations

Such incitement and attacks cannot go unanswered. These actions constitute **serious violations** of the Charter, Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations; Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolutions, including, *inter alia*, **resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2730 (2024)**; and countless General Assembly resolutions, from resolution 302 (IV) establishing UNRWA to the present day, including **resolutions 78/74 and other relevant resolutions** adopted on 7 December 2023 by an overwhelming majority, indeed with **only one vote against: by Israel, the occupying Power**.

It is the **duty of all Member States to act on their obligations under the Charter**, including under **Articles 100, 104 and 105**, and likewise the **duty of the Security Council, General Assembly and Secretary-General to defend UNRWA and the entirety of the United Nations from such libelous and dangerous attacks** by Israeli officials and military personnel and to demand that they cease forthwith. The **High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions must act** to uphold international humanitarian law.

The Security Council must act immediately to **bring a halt to all unlawful Israeli measures and attacks** and demand a **halt to all interference, incitement and threats** against UNRWA and the endangerment of its staff and premises. The **General Assembly must act to protect UNRWA and ensure that its mandate is upheld and implemented, in all five fields of operation**, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. **Israel, the occupying Power, must be reminded that it is not the sovereign** in any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and **has no right whatsoever to obstruct the functioning of UNRWA therein or to evict the Agency from its premises**, including its compound in occupied East Jerusalem.

All States and organizations donors to UNRWA and the members of its Advisory Commission must act to defend the Agency and ensure its indispensable operations are sustained with necessary political and financial backing, pending a just solution for the Palestine refugee plight in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions, including resolution 194 (III).

As underscored by Commissioner-General Lazzarini, *“The world must act decisively against the illegitimate attacks on the United Nations, not only for Gaza and Palestinians but for all nations”*. He has warned, *inter alia*, *“If we tolerate such attacks in the context of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, we cannot uphold humanitarian principles in other conflicts around the world... It must not become the new norm.”* Moreover, he has rightly stated that the scale and scope of attacks on UN personnel and premises in these past 8 months call for the **establishment of an independent investigative body** by a relevant UN organ in order to ascertain the facts and identify those responsible for attacks on its agencies, ensure accountability and reaffirm the inviolability of international law.

Before concluding this letter, and in follow-up of all my recent letters regarding the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, where the **situation in Gaza remains most catastrophic and grave**, I must also draw your attention to the **dangerous situation in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem**, as IOF and settlers continue endangering the Palestinian civilian population in daily raids and violent attacks.

Since 26 May alone, **IOF have carried out hundreds of raids** targeting numerous cities and refugee camps across the West Bank, **causing the worst destruction in decades** and deliberately infringing on every aspect of Palestinian life. In the Jenin governate alone, 122 Palestinians, including 30 children, have been killed since 7 October and hundreds have been injured. Moreover, **nearly 10,000 Palestinians, mostly men and boys, have been imprisoned, dehumanized, and tortured since 7 October**.

Moreover, emboldened by IOF’s impunity, Israeli settlers are mobilizing extremist militias to attack Palestinian towns and villages, aimed at intimidating, terrorizing and dispossessing Palestinians from their

homes and lands. Israeli officials, **emboldened by the zero accountability for their crimes, are poised to replicate the genocide and mass destruction in Gaza within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.**

In this regard, Bezalel Smotrich, the occupation's so-called Minister of Finance and a settler who oversees Israel's colonial settlements, has **called on the Israeli army to unleash another war in the West Bank akin to the destructive and deadly war in Gaza.** In his latest video, Smotrich directly incited violence against Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank, stating, *"We will turn you into ruins like in the Gaza Strip."* This threat should not be taken lightly, especially given his past incitement and repeated calls on IOF and settlers to eradicate Palestinian towns and refugee camps and expel Palestinians from their homeland.

We again appeal to the international community, including the Security Council, to act to bring an end to these crimes and to this depraved, illegal Israeli occupation and siege on the Palestinian people.

It is time to **hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide it is perpetrating against the Palestinian people,** and it is time to act concretely and collectively to uphold international law throughout the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in the Gaza Strip and including in East Jerusalem, to enforce an **immediate ceasefire** and to **protect the Palestinian people and likewise protect those aiding them, including UNRWA and other UN agencies on the ground, who are carrying out this noble and indispensable humanitarian work** on behalf of the international community.

This letter is in follow-up to our **837** letters on the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 31 May 2024 (A/ES-10/_-S/2024/_) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations against our people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter circulated to the Security Council members for their valuable consideration and distributed as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Dr. Riyadh Mansour
Minister, Permanent Observer