

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



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

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Excellency,

The Security Council's failure to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, due to the veto cast by the United States, has permitted the Israeli war machine to carry on with its slaughter of Palestinian civilians with total impunity. Once again, **Israel interprets this shielding as a license to kill**, committing **more atrocities and horrors** against Palestinian civilians at a scope and scale shocking humanity.

In the three days following the veto of the draft resolution presented by the United Arab Emirates and cosponsored by 102 other countries, hundreds more Palestinian civilians have been murdered and thousands more have been wounded by Israel, the occupying Power. Every 24 hours brings hundreds of deaths and more devastation. This horrific equation cannot be obscured by any distorted pretexts or false rhetoric.

Innocent children, women and men are being killed and lives are being destroyed in the absence of a ceasefire being called for from every corner of the world precisely to save and protect civilian lives. The obstruction of the Council's Charter duties stands in stark contrast to the global appeals for a halt to the bloodshed, defies the inherent human instinct to preserve human life, and breaches the core tenets of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

Moreover, this obstruction disregards the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the UN Charter, on 6 December, urgently warning that, *inter alia*, this unprecedented situation "may aggravate existing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security"; that "Civilians throughout Gaza face grave danger"; that "There is no effective protection of civilians"; that "We are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system... with potentially irreversible implications for Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region"; and appealing to the Security Council to declare a humanitarian ceasefire to spare civilians from greater harm and avert such a catastrophic outcome.

Regrettably, such urgent warnings and appeals continue to be ignored, enabling Israel, the occupying Power, to carry on with its genocidal onslaught, bombarding Gaza by air, land and sea, threatening the survival of more Palestinian civilians and risking further dangerous destabilization in the region and beyond. Every day without a ceasefire is a grave day, marked by more loss of life, forced displacement, destruction, human suffering and peril to regional and international peace and security.

The result has been an ever-climbing toll of death and injury in Gaza. More than 18,000 Palestinians have been killed, including over 7,729 children and 5,153 women, and over 49,229 people injured. 7,800 people are still missing under the rubble of the over 60% of housing damaged or destroyed by Israel's missile and bomb attacks in just two months' time, flattening entire neighborhoods atop their residents. At least 1,550 families having suffered multiple fatalities, generations of families decimated.

Injured persons are enduring untold agonies due to severity of the wounds caused by Israel's lethal weaponry and lack of access to medical care and lifesaving treatments as Israel illegal siege of Gaza continues. This punitive, inhumane siege has also caused a "catastrophic hunger crisis", according to the World Food

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Programme (WFP). **Israel continues to deprive the population of adequate supplies of food, water, medicine and fuel for basic life functions**, including sanitation systems, **causing spread of illness and epidemic diseases**, as it continues impeding entry and delivery of humanitarian aid and attacking humanitarian workers, killing 132 UNRWA staff and 286 health workers among others thus far.

Israeli occupying forces (IOF) **have also rounded up and detained hundreds of Palestinian men and boys in Gaza, stripping them to their underwear and corralling them** outside in harsh weather conditions, **subjecting them to abuse**, including forced interrogations and beatings, **some abducted to unknown locations**, adding to the indignation and inhumane treatment being suffered by the population.

Against the backdrop of such circumstances, UN agencies, including UNRWA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and others, are attempting to continue their efforts to provide desperately-needed assistance to Palestinians in Gaza, where now **1.93 million people, a shocking 85% of the population, have been forcibly displaced by the Israeli aggression**. But their **humanitarian mission has become more untenable by the day**; the Secretary-General has alerted: *“The conditions for effective delivery of humanitarian aid no longer exist”*.

In this regard, **UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazarrini**, describing the *“darkest hour in the Agency’s 75-year history”*, sent an unprecedented letter, on 7 December, to the President of the General Assembly, **urging Member States to act immediately to implement a humanitarian ceasefire** and international law. He stresses, *inter alia*, the risks to UNRWA’s ability to fulfill its mandate, with *“dire consequences for the UN humanitarian response and the lives of civilians in Gaza”*, as UNRWA *“has become the primary platform for humanitarian assistance to over 2.2 million people in Gaza”*. Moreover, he has gravely warned: *“... without safe shelter and aid, civilians in Gaza risk death or will be forced to Egypt and beyond... A forced displacement beyond Palestinian land, reminiscent of the 1948 Nakba, must be prevented”*.

We echo the Commissioner-General’s warnings and reiterate the State of Palestine’s constant **appeals for an immediate ceasefire to halt the bloodshed of our people, halt their forced displacement and attempts at their mass deportation, protect them in conformity with international humanitarian law, and ensure immediate humanitarian assistance at scale** to meet the enormous needs caused by the human and humanitarian catastrophe inflicted by Israel on our defenseless civilians in Gaza. The **international community cannot fail to act in the face of the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by Israel**, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people under its illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime.

In this regard, we must also draw attention to the **marked escalation of violence in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem**, where IOF and Israeli settlers persist with their provocations, incitement, intimidation and attacks against the Palestinian civilian population. Refugee camps especially have been targeted, and the casualty toll since 7 October has now reached **266 Palestinians killed, including 70 children, and 3,432 injured**.

Settler terror has spiked as extremist settlers are emboldened not only by Israeli leaders’ inflammatory rhetoric and dangerous incitement, but are being **armed and trained as militias**. As reported by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), **Israel has established 100 so-called “Community Security Squads”, arming them with M16 rifles** and giving them “accelerated training”. Such settler “squads” are clearly an **extension of the IOF which has long aid and abetted settler crimes** in Occupied Palestine, including killing and injury of Palestinian civilians, theft of Palestinian land, crops and livestock, vandalism and destruction of Palestinian homes and vehicles, and forced displacement of hundreds of civilians, including entire communities. And, still, **Israel continues to authorize the construction of more settlements** on the Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, that it continues to illegally occupy and attempt to annex.

All of this is happening in **grave breach of international law**, including humanitarian and human rights law, and is happening because of the **exceptionalism and impunity granted to Israel**, including as a

result of its **continued shielding in the Security Council from accountability** for its violations and crimes. This **illegal, unjust and dangerous situation** cannot be allowed to continue. The repercussions of inaction will be far-reaching, for Palestinians, for Israelis, for the Middle East region, and for the international community as a whole. **A world where international law is flouted with no consequences is a world where lawlessness will reign and no civilian and no country is safe.**

The **General Assembly**, the world's parliament, has an **opportunity and a responsibility to correct course, for the millions of civilian lives at stake and for the international law-based order at stake.** As the Assembly resumes its 10th emergency special session to address the grave situation in the Gaza Strip, the State of Palestine appeals to all peace-loving nations to uphold international law and to **support the draft resolution presented by Egypt demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.**

This must be our collective priority and is of **utmost urgency to save and protect civilian lives and avert continued deterioration of this already grave and catastrophic situation.** We implore the international community to uphold in word and in deeds the **legal, political, humanitarian and moral obligations** incumbent on all. The Palestinian people and peoples all across the world are looking to the General Assembly now to act without delay to **restore their faith in the rule of law and in humanity.**

This letter is in follow-up to our **818** 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 5 December 2023 (A/ES-10/_-S/2023/_) 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