



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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Contents

Page

I. UN Human Rights High Commissioner Türk addresses Human Rights Council on situation in OPT	1
II. OIC condemns Israeli minister's call for obliteration of the Palestinian village of Huwwara	3
III. UNRWA Commissioner-General Lazzarini addresses Arab League	4
IV. EU High Representative Borrell on the latest violence in Israel and the OPT	6
V. OIC condemns Jenin killings, calls for international protection for the Palestinians	7
VI. UN Special Coordinator Wennesland appalled by the attacks of Israeli settlers in Huwwara	8
VII. Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes list of issues in relation to the periodic reports of Israel	8
VIII. UN Women on helping survivors of violence through health care in the West Bank	12
IX. OIC condemns killing of Palestinians by Israel	13
X. Palestinian Rights Committee holds a virtual event on the impact of Nakba	14
XI. UNRWA calls on Inter-Parliamentary Union to further support Palestinian refugees	16

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
XII. Palestinian Rights Committee Chair addresses Organisation of Islamic Cooperation	17
XIII. UNRWA responds to report by UN Watch and IMPACT-se	19
XIV. UN Special Coordinator Wennesland briefs the Security Council on implementation of UNSCR 2334 (2016)	20
XV. Ramadan message from UNRWA Commissioner-General Lazzarini	26
XVI. OIC condemns the Israeli approval of a plan to build new settlement units	27
XVII. UNRWA Commissioner-General Lazzarini welcomes extension of his mandate	28
XVIII. OIC condemns storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by extremist settlers protected by the Israeli forces	28
XIX. UN Special Rapporteur Albanese calls for protection of Palestinians	29

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I. UN HUMAN RIGHTS HIGH COMMISSIONER TÜRK ADDRESSES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON SITUATION IN OPT

On 3 March, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, made the following [statement](#).

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a tragedy.

A tragedy, above all, for the Palestinian people. Over half a century of occupation has led to widening dispossession, deepening deprivation and recurring and severe violations of their rights, including the right to life. Nobody could wish to live this way – or imagine that forcing people into conditions of such desperation can lead to an enduring solution.

The people of Israel also suffer from this situation: insecurity, pain, loss and fear. They have a right to live in peace, in their State – just as Palestinians do, in a State that is, finally, recognised and viable.

But the current intensification of violence on all sides makes that prospect seem very distant.

2022 saw both the highest number of Palestinians killed by Israeli Security Forces in the past 17 years, and the highest number of Israelis killed since 2016. This death toll has further, and sharply, deteriorated in the first weeks of 2023, and in the month that has just ended.

On Sunday night, two Israeli brothers, aged 19 and 21 years old, were killed by a Palestinian in the West Bank town of Huwvara.

Hours later, hundreds of Israeli settlers rioted across the area. One Palestinian man was shot dead and two others were shot and wounded. A third person was stabbed, and a fourth badly beaten. Palestinian homes, shops and dozens of vehicles were set on fire or damaged. The Palestinian Red Crescent said 390 people were wounded in the rampage; three ambulances were attacked.

The attack was strongly condemned by the President of Israel, who called it “criminal violence against innocents,” which “harms us as a moral society and a lawful country.”

Yet, the Finance Minister publicly called for the town of Huwvara to be “wiped out”, an unfathomable statement of incitement to violence and hostility.

Increasing violence is condemning innocent people on all sides to further tragedy, in a terrible, self-sustaining logic – or rather, illogic – of confrontation.

My report [A/HRC/52/75](#) finds that over the reporting period, lethal force has been frequently employed by the Israeli Security Forces, regardless of the level of threat – and, at times, even as an initial measure, rather than as last resort. My Office has also documented several cases of apparent extrajudicial, targeted killings by members of the ISF.

The report finds that 131 Palestinians were killed by ISF personnel over the past year in a context of law enforcement – that is, outside any context of hostilities. This includes 65 people who we understand were not armed, nor engaged in any attacks or clashes. Since 2017, fewer than 15% of such killings have been investigated, and fewer than 1% led to an indictment.

Thirteen Israelis were killed by Palestinians during the period covered by this report. Nine Israelis – including three children – and a foreign national have been killed in two attacks since then.

Collective punishments, which are prohibited by international law, are increasingly imposed on Palestinians by Israel. The blockade of Gaza, which restricts 2 million people to that territory, has been in effect for 16 years.

Currently, 967 Palestinians are being held in what is termed administrative detention, in which people are arbitrarily detained for often lengthy periods without charge or trial. This is the highest number in 15 years.

Unlawful killings, use of force, and torture and ill-treatment by the Palestinian Security Forces also meet with impunity. The same is true of the Gaza de facto authorities.

More than 270 Israeli settlements encroach on and fragment Palestine. The Separation Wall divides thousands of Palestinians from each other and their lands. It constitutes a major obstacle to their freedom of movement – including impairing access to health-care, schools and employment – and it imposes a suffocating straitjacket on their lives.

Lethal force has repeatedly been employed against Palestinian workers attempting to cross the Wall into Israel. During the reporting period, two men were shot and killed, and 35 were shot and injured, by Israeli Security Forces in these circumstances.

Decade upon decade of loss and violence. Violence against the occupation; violence to uphold and enforce it. I condemn the violence that has killed and harmed so many people on both sides – and which generates overwhelming despair. On both sides there is, I believe, a growing sense of a narrowing future, in which nobody can even hope for peace and security, for anyone's children.

The occupation is eating away at the health of both societies, on every level – from childhood to old age, and in every part of life.

For this violence to end, the occupation must end. On all sides, there are people who know this.

It is my fervent conviction that the human rights cause, which unifies us and brings us back to what is human, can be the impetus for changing course towards peace and security for everyone.

I urge decision-makers and people on all sides to give effect to the recommendations of our reports and to step back from the precipice to which increasing extremism and violence have led.

I would like to highlight some of the recurring recommendations from the human rights system that would make an immediate difference.

Take steps to ensure that ISF actions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, operate within the boundaries set by international human rights law for law enforcement operations.

Treat all cases of violence equally. The law is not law if it applies only to one side. There must be genuine accountability for all acts of unlawful violence as a first essential step towards greater calm: – the lethal mob violence in Huwwara on Sunday, and the two murders that preceded it.

All sides should adhere completely to the spirit and wording of the [agreement](#) reached at the Summit in Aqaba on 26 February, and build on this experience of opening the issues to regional solutions, to resolve other issues in the future.

Prevent or, when they occur, investigate and prosecute abuses at checkpoints. End the blockade of Gaza. Ease – instead of tighten – restrictions to improve people’s lives and allow them to breathe.

And tug young people – indeed, people of every age and political opinion – away from further violence and extremism and the illusion that this represents any solution.

Steps such as these are rooted in the reporting and monitoring of my Office. They could immediately help to lessen the violence – instead of the current, sharply escalating trajectory towards much worse.

Member States should play a role in assisting all parties to find the exit ramp. In the near future, there must be an end to settlements in occupied land. And within a foreseeable horizon, there must be a two-State solution, with an end to the occupation, and mutual recognition of the legitimate rights of all Israelis and Palestinians to live in dignity, peace and security.

II. OIC CONDEMNS ISRAELI MINISTER’S CALL FOR OBLITERATION OF THE PALESTINIAN VILLAGE OF HUWWARA

On 3 March, the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation OIC issued the following [statement](#).

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the dangerous racist statement made by the extremist Israeli finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, in which he called for the “obliteration of a Palestinian village from the map.” The OIC believes that this racist statement is a direct invitation to continued violence and an incitement to the killing and terrorization by gangs of extremist settlers against the Palestinian people and their property.

The OIC also strongly condemned the preliminary passage of the bill on execution of Palestinian prisoners, noting that these invalid racist Israeli laws violate the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and relevant United Nations resolutions. It called on the international community to assume its responsibilities in putting an end to these Israeli violations and providing international protection for the Palestinian people.

III. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL LAZZARINI ADDRESSES ARAB LEAGUE

On 8 March, the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, made the following [statement](#) at the ordinary session of the Council of the Arab League at the level of Foreign Ministers in Cairo.

I am grateful for the renewed opportunity to raise the plight of Palestine refugees.

The Meeting of Foreign Ministers is taking place against the tragic background of the devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria.

Palestine refugees who live in the Northern part of Syria suffered loss of life, displacement, and sheer terror at the destitution that still awaits them.

It is in situations of such apocalyptic magnitude that one sees the genuine commitment of governments and people towards humanity.

Those who shine are the ones who stand by the side of affected people.

The Arab region was shining with solidarity.

The UNRWA teams were in Aleppo and Latakia on the day after the earthquake.

They distributed food, medical services and psychological support to hundreds of Palestine refugees whose homes were totally or severely destroyed.

Several of our schools in the area became temporary homes.

This meeting is also taking place amidst extremely serious deterioration of the security situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We are witnessing a shocking level of violence and an equally shocking rhetoric.

Last Thursday, I visited Aqbat Jabr refugee camp in Jericho. The day before, armed violence erupted nearby two UNRWA schools.

Teachers shared with me stories of terrified children as they tried to keep them inside the school to protect them.

The Agency for Palestine refugees is nearing 75 years of existence.

Never have Palestine refugees felt as vulnerable as they do today, in the face of diminished global attention, changed regional dynamics and the rise of explicit calls to undermine their rights and refugee status.

This calls for reflection on the future of millions of Palestine refugees, many of whom continue to live in extremely challenging conditions and precarious legal status.

As we near this very sober mark, UNRWA has a lot to be proud of.

Brilliant students in UNRWA schools, excellent health indicators, universal vaccination rates, and much more.

But at the heart of the work of UNRWA is an unresolved conflict, one of the longest in recent history.

Palestine refugees all await a just and lasting solution.

There has never been a greater need for Arab solidarity with them as the region undergoes yet another worrying episode of violence and socio-economic demise.

The reflection on the future of Palestine refugees must be part and parcel of any discussion or initiative about the road to peace. Whether these are new discussions, or revived discussions.

Our services have offered a lifeline to one of the most marginalized communities in the region.

Our education, health and social services all have allowed many Palestine refugees to lead healthy productive lives.

Our vocational centers have graduated young women and men who find jobs despite high unemployment.

But UNRWA is underfunded every year, and lives on austerity and debt.

Our fragile finances do not allow the kind of modernization and upgrading that we aspire to; that is needed to remain relevant and effective.

Take education for example: just before the earthquake hit Syria, I met young women and men who study in our vocational center in Aleppo.

They asked for courses to learn entrepreneurship.

They asked for internships in technology and communication companies.

They asked for intensive language training to allow them to connect with the world online.

Our vocational centers are no longer able to offer cutting-edge courses, like coding or app development.

Old skills which we have long offered are becoming less competitive in a world where technology skills drive employment.

In Gaza though, we did manage to offer coding and Information Technology courses in our vocational center.

The result is a generation of Palestine refugees who sit in an UNRWA IT Center in Gaza, under the blockade, and offer online services to UN offices across the world.

Another example is green and renewable energy. Our young students are increasingly aware of the need for environmentally friendly solutions in very, very crowded refugee camps.

Ghada is a student in the UNRWA vocational center in Gaza. She is studying to be able to put in place alternative solar and energy systems in factories and businesses.

The quality education refugees receive in UNRWA schools and vocational centers is often their passport to work and their own self-reliance.

The contribution of UNRWA to the wellbeing of Palestine refugees and stability in the region cannot be overstated.

As we look to the future, UNRWA must have the resources to modernize its operations and its education in schools and in vocational and training centers.

Young Palestine refugees wherever they are in Aleppo, in Gaza or in Beirut deserve the opportunity to thrive.

Palestine refugee women in the West Bank or Jordan want to receive micro funds to help them start their businesses and become financially independent.

Advanced technology courses can enable youth to work globally as technology specialists, programmers, analysts, quality control professionals, and project managers, while in their homes and still unable to travel freely.

This opens more prospects for them and will contribute positively to their lives and to the region.

UNRWA is seeking a renewed commitment of member-states of the Arab League to the human development of the Palestine refugee communities.

This is a cornerstone of regional stability, and a reiteration of the generosity and solidarity that the Arab region is known for.

Together we need to bring in knowledge, resources and creative energy to the Palestine refugee communities in the region.

And together, we must continue to keep hope alive.

IV. EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE BORRELL ON THE LATEST VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL AND THE OPT

On 8 March, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, made the following [statement](#) on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union and its Member States are deeply concerned by the increasing violence and extremism in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, which are leading to appalling numbers of Israeli and Palestinian victims, including children. The situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a great cause for concern.

We call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to de-escalate the situation and to refrain from actions that will increase the already high level of tension. Settlements are illegal under international law.

Israel must stop settlement expansion, prevent settler violence, and ensure the perpetrators are held accountable. Military operations must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. There must be an immediate end to terror attacks, which should be condemned by everyone, and to practices that support them. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip requires further easing of restrictions. The status quo of the Holy Sites must be upheld in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. Peaceful coexistence between Christians, Jews and Muslims must be maintained.

All these issues are obstacles to peace.

We commend the efforts of the US, Jordan, and Egypt to de-escalate and support the Aqaba communique. All parties should observe the agreements in Aqaba in good faith.

It is vital to restore a political horizon towards a two-state solution. Only a negotiated agreement offers a chance of security and peace for all.

There is an urgent need for a new perspective for peace. Three weeks ago, the High Representative/Vice President met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal and with Arab League Secretary-General Aboul Gheit. They agreed to revive and build on the [Arab Peace Initiative](#), and the EU reaffirmed its proposal of an unprecedented package of economic, political and security support in the context of a final status agreement as endorsed in the Council conclusions of December 2013. In this effort, we work closely with other Arab and international partners. While we cannot force the parties to make peace, we share a responsibility to prepare the ground. Security, the rule of law and peace in the Middle East, are a priority for the EU.

V. OIC CONDEMNS JENIN KILLINGS, CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR PALESTINIANS

On 8 March, the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation issued the following [statement](#).

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemned the horrific crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Jenin camp, which led to six martyrs and a number of wounded Palestinians, as well as the continuation of acts of violence and intimidation perpetrated by extremist settlers in the Palestinian town of Hawara [Huwwara]; what is a clear extension of the open Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in a blatant violation international humanitarian law.

The Organization held the Israeli occupation fully responsible for the consequences of its continued crimes and aggressions that will increase tension and instability in the region. It called at the same time the international actors to intervene in order to stop the continuous Israeli crimes throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including the city of Al-Qods Al-Sherif, and to provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

VI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND APPALLED BY THE ATTACKS OF ISRAELI SETTLERS AGAINST PALESTINIANS IN HUWWARA

On 8 March, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, issued the following [statement](#).

I am deeply disturbed by the continuing violence and appalled by the attacks of Israeli settlers against Palestinians two days ago in Huwwara, near Nablus. Israel, as the occupying power, must ensure that the civilian population is protected, and perpetrators are held to account.

I condemn settler violence against Palestinians. I condemn Palestinian attacks against Israelis. All civilians must be protected from violence.

I am also alarmed by the events that unfolded yesterday during an Israeli operation in Jenin, resulting in armed exchanges between Israeli security forces and armed Palestinians. Six Palestinians were killed, including the perpetrator of the 26 February terrorist attack in Huwwara.

We are in the midst of a cycle of violence that must be stopped immediately.

The Security Council has spoken with one voice, calling on the parties to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Commitments were made in Aqaba in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan that should be implemented if we are to find a way forward.

The parties must refrain from further steps that would lead us to more violence.

VII. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD PUBLISHES LIST OF ISSUES IN RELATION TO THE PERIODIC REPORTS OF ISRAEL

On 9 March, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued the following [report \(CRC/C/ISR/Q/5-6\)](#) regarding the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Israel under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which excerpts appear below.

...

1. The State party is requested to submit in writing additional, updated information (10,700 words maximum), if possible before 15 September 2023. The Committee may take up all aspects of children's rights set out in the Convention during the dialogue with the State party.

...

2. Please provide information on:

....

(f) The engagement with civil society actors in a systematic way, including those which monitor the child rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and increase resources provided to non-governmental organizations to monitor and promote children's rights.

3. Please detail the measures taken:

(a) To monitor the application of Military Order 1676 (2011), by which the age of majority in the military courts was raised from 16 to 18 years, and sanctions for its violation;

(b) To remove any exceptions to marriage under the age of 18, including the discretion of the Family Matters Court to permit marriage of children above the age of 16.

4. Please update the Committee on progress made:

(a) In enshrining the principles prohibiting discrimination and guaranteeing equality in the State party's Basic Laws, repealing discriminatory laws and policies against non-Jewish children, prohibiting and eradicating policies or practices that severely and disproportionately affect the Palestinian population, particularly children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and ensuring that all children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory enjoy their rights under the Convention without discrimination;

(b) In developing procedures and criteria for determining the best interests of the child in every area and ensuring their wide dissemination, and assessing the impact of the State party's policies on children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and ensuring that their best interests are fully taken into account in its military governance of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the 2022 Anti-Infiltration Law;

(c) In taking actions to cease all killings and injuring of Palestinian children, investigating all such crimes, bringing the perpetrators to justice and providing compensation, recovery and social integration services for all child victims of those human rights violations;

(d) In preventing incidents of excessive use of force, ensuring public order and investigating and ensuring accountability for all acts of violence committed by settlers against Palestinian children;

(e) In ceasing the construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, fully lifting the Gaza blockade and allowing entry of all construction materials necessary for Palestinian families to rebuild homes and civilian infrastructure.

...

(a) To ensure birth registration for all children, including children of migrants, and repeal all legal provisions which result in denying the right of Palestinian children to be registered immediately after birth, to acquire a nationality and to be cared for by their parents, and to address the discriminatory effect of notifications of live birth on non-nationals;

...

7. Please provide information on measures taken:

(a) To develop a comprehensive national strategy and coordination framework to prevent and address all forms of violence against children and ensure that it devotes particular attention to the racist and gender dimensions of violence in the State party;

(b) To remove all children from solitary confinement, investigate alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment, including against Palestinian children, provide safe and child-friendly complaint mechanisms to children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory with regard to the treatment they were subjected to at the time of arrest and subsequent detention, and ensure physical and psychological recovery as well as social reintegration services for all child victims of torture and ill-treatment;

(c) To monitor that children undergoing interrogation by the Israeli Security Agency are accorded “all the rights to which they are entitled according to the applicable law and international conventions to which Israel is a party, including the rights to legal representation, medical care and visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross”, as mentioned in paragraph 77 of the report of the State party;

(d) To monitor respect for the operative guidelines of the Israeli Security Agency that provide for special protection to children “to ensure proper protection of their rights and physical and mental well-being” referred to in paragraph 78 of the report of the State party;

...

(c) In reuniting all separated Palestinian children with their parents and with their siblings and revoking the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law and all policies that are in breach of articles 9 and 10 of the Convention and which prevent family reunification;

(d) In strengthening the foster care system, decreasing the number of children in residential institutions, investigating the responsibilities in the 2008 closure of the child institutions in Hebron by the Israeli Defence Forces and providing resources to all evicted children for their shelter and care in appropriate conditions.

...

(b) The measures in place to guarantee safe and unconditional access to health services, including emergency medical care, adequate medical supplies and trained personnel for all pregnant women and children with their caregivers, particularly those who live in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to ensure the timely transfer without delay at checkpoints of all children with their caregivers and pregnant mothers in need of medical care;

(c) The cessation of attacks against hospitals and facilitation of their reconstruction;

(d) Actions taken to restore confiscated land to Palestinian and Bedouin families, to ensure they are not deprived of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and food and to allow humanitarian agencies unimpeded access to families and children;

...

(c) Protecting children on their way to and from school in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from harassment, intimidation and violence by ensuring that the settlers and security forces are held accountable, ceasing attacks against schools and the use of schools as outposts and detention centres in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, tackling the school shortage in East Jerusalem and

removing all restrictions on freedom of movement which prevent Palestinian children from attending schools.

...

(c) Progress made in implementing the Committee's previous recommendations ([CRC/C/ISR/CO/2-4](#), para. 74),¹ in particular with respect to guaranteeing non-discrimination in the application of child justice standards and the dismantling of the institutionalized system of detention and the use of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian children at all stages of the judicial procedure.

...

15. The data, statistics and other information requested in the present section, if available, should include all territory under the State party's jurisdiction in accordance with international law, including the Occupied Palestinian Territory (West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip) and the Occupied Syrian Golan.

16. Please provide consolidated information, for the past three years, on the budget lines regarding children and the social sectors, indicating the percentage of each budget line in terms of the total national budget and the gross national product. Please also provide information on the geographical allocation of those resources.

...

(b) Rates of malnutrition of children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(c) Number of children who have been displaced or are homeless as a result of eviction from or demolition of their home;

...

20. Please provide updated statistical data, disaggregated by age, sex, type of offence, ethnic origin, national origin, geographical location and socioeconomic status, for the past three years, on children in conflict with the law who have been:

(a) Arrested;

(b) Referred to diversion programmes;

(c) Provided with free legal aid;

(d) In pretrial detention, including information on the average duration of pretrial detention and the number of children who spent longer than the authorized time in pretrial detention;

(e) Detained with adults;

(f) Transferred from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and detained in Israel;

¹[CRC/C/ISR/CO/2-4](#), para. 74.

(g) Convicted and are serving a sentence in detention, including information on the length of the sentence.

...

VIII. UN WOMEN IS HELPING SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE THROUGH HEALTH CARE IN THE WEST BANK

On 10 March, UN Women published the following [article](#).

“I see a lot of cases involving women who were being subjected to violence. I want to help these women,” says Mukaram Jalayta, Head of Jericho Hospital’s obstetrics department and Liaison Officer for its GBV program.

In Palestine, violence against women is a major concern, with [three in five](#) ever married women subjected to violence by their husbands and two in five single women by family members. Over half of women in Palestine who experienced violence chose to remain silent.

Places offering health care services are often survivors of violence’s first point of call when seeking help after being subjected to violence. The dedicated health care professionals are working to ensure that survivors receive medical treatment, are transferred to appropriate sectors, and more. “We also offer guidance and advice to the survivors in order to find alternatives that can help them break and escape the cycle of violence (in which they are living),” says Mukaram. “We support, help, and protect survivors of violence.”

In partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Health and through the HAYA Joint Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has completed seven training workshops for almost 170 health care professionals in the West Bank on how to effectively respond to sexual and GBV cases. From forensic medicine to proper treatment, documentation, and evidence handling, Mukaram explained that the training was useful not only for her and her colleagues but ultimately for survivors as well, through empowering service providers to better help survivors of violence. “The training was fantastic,” explains Mukaram. “We learned how to preserve evidence, examine wounds, measure their length and depth, and record their colour. We were also trained in how to write forensic medical reports specifically relating to violence and survivors.”

Mukaram says, while they offered necessary medical treatment, there were gaps they were unaware of prior to their training with UNODC. “For example, before when we would receive a case of someone who had been subjected to violence, such as rape, we wouldn’t preserve the evidence,” she explains. “We used to address the survivor’s other needs, such as changing her clothes, letting her wash her hands, etc.”

“These trainings gave us the strength and knowledge in many areas,” clarified Mukaram. She says they have developed their knowledge and learned new skills to recognise, intervene, and manage GBV cases, and they now know the correct procedures to follow. Through this, Mukaram and her colleagues have learned how to provide a higher quality of service to survivors.

“In the HAYA Joint Programme, we work with our national partners to improve the quality of, and access to, comprehensive services for women survivors of violence as well as the capacities

of the services providers themselves,” says HAYA Joint Programme Manager Hazam Tahbub. “It is crucial to support the health workers who provide services through the GBV rooms where survivors can access both medical and psychosocial support.”

In addition to specialized training for health professionals, the HAYA Joint Programme, through the UNFPA with the Palestinian Ministry of Health has established these “GBV rooms” in hospitals and primary care directorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestine has been one of the first countries to adopt GBV rooms, which provide safe and private spaces for survivors of violence. Dedicated personnel in these rooms support survivors through medical, social, and psychological services. Mukaram often provides treatment and support to survivors in these rooms.

While things have now improved, Mukaram says that those in the health care sector face challenges such as heavy workloads. In addition, protests and threats by the perpetrators, survivors’ families, or even the community itself are other obstacles they can face.

Mukaram hopes for more training to enhance her skills to provide survivors with the best care. She also feels awareness raising around violence against women and its consequences is vital, as well as policy making to fight against this violence. She encourages all women to seek out health care services and report when they have been subjected to violence.

Her hope, she says is to one day see Palestine free of violence, “Yes, to ending violence against women. This is my motto.”

IX. OIC STRONGLY CONDEMNS KILLING OF THREE PALESTINIANS BY ISRAEL

On 12 March, the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation issued the following [statement](#).

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), condemned the Israeli occupation forces for the cold-blooded killing of three Palestinian citizens inside their vehicle near the city of Nablus.

The OIC held the Israeli occupation responsible for the continuation of its heinous crimes against the Palestinian people, calling for the formation of an international commission of inquiry, and calling on the actors of the international community to intervene urgently to stop these continuous Israeli crimes throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and to provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

X. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE HOLDS A VIRTUAL EVENT ON THE IMPACT OF NAKBA

On 15 March, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) organized a virtual event on the margins of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the “Memories of the Nakba and its impact on Palestinians”, a discussion with Nadine Sayegh, author of the book “Oranges from Jaffa”. The [chair’s summary](#) of the event is reproduced below.

The event “**Memories of the Nakba and its impact on Palestinians**,” a discussion with Nadine Sayegh, author of the book “Oranges from Jaffa” was held on the margins of the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and was convened virtually, on 15 March 2023, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP).

The event was moderated by **H.E. Mr. Neville Gertze**, Vice-Chair of the Committee and Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations. It consisted of an opening session with remarks by the Vice-Chair and **H.E. Ms. Feda Abdelhady-Nasser**, Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. **Ms. Nadine Sayegh**, author of the book

“Oranges from Jaffa – A True Story about the End of the Golden Age of Palestine”, discussed the enduring impact of the Nakba on the lives of millions of Palestinians as a result of that historic displacement and dispossession that continues to this day. The book, a personal family story, showcases Jaffa in 1948, the ancient Palestinian city, and the rising tensions and violence that lead to the Nakba forcing entire families to leave the city without knowing that they would never return.

Member States participated in the two-hour event, which was also livestreamed on UN WebTV as well as the Committee’s YouTube channel. The public had an opportunity to make comments and pose questions to the panellist.

At the opening, **Ambassador Gertze** emphasized that General Assembly resolution A/77/23 adopted on 30 November 2022, called on the Committee to dedicate its 2023 activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. He highlighted how the current event aimed at building upon the General Assembly’s request, at highlighting the challenges faced by Palestinians, including women, and at disseminating reflexions on the long-lasting trauma inflicted upon generations of Palestinians through dispossession and exile. He introduced Ms. Nadine Sayegh and her book “Oranges from Jaffa” narrating the coming-of-age story of her father, Nicolas Sayegh, a Palestinian boy whose carefree childhood in Jaffa ends abruptly when his family and other Palestinians had to flee. **Ambassador Gertze** further explained that the Nakba, which refers to the pivotal and catastrophic events of the spring of 1948 that led to the loss of life, displacement, imprisonment, and exile of thousands of Palestinians seemingly continues to this day through the dispossession, expulsions of Palestinians from their homes and lands, collective punishment and annexation. He commended the number of Palestinian authors, most notably female ones, for unearthing the history of the Nakba through their essays, novels, and movies and welcomed the panellist relevant contribution to this legacy.

Ambassador Gertze also stated that the continuing endurance of the Palestinian people required the international community's continued support in bringing justice to them and to realize their right to self-determination, freedom, independence and return to their homeland.

In her introductory remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** spoke about how the book depicted the vibrant life that thrived in Palestine before the Nakba. She further stressed the importance of humanizing the story of a people who have been dehumanized, the victims of violence and displacement whose history was under threat of being erased. Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser further underlined that Palestinians were still victims of an ongoing Nakba, and that the Palestinian people were continuing their struggle for justice, dignity and their rights. Such longings were perpetuated among generations after generations of Palestinians, 75 years after the Nakba.

Ms. Nadine Sayegh presented her book and explained what encouraged her to write her family story. She mentioned that she wanted to capture the story of her father, a "time witness," and part of the last generation who could claim to have been born in "Palestine". The book's story enhanced her father's descendants' pride to be Palestinians. The author also read extracts of her book, which portrayed Palestine before the Nakba as a modern, hard-working, culturally rich and tolerant society. The extracts she read also described how different religions lived side-by-side in Jaffa, and how its inhabitants were proud of the city's rich heritage.

The presentation included a background slide show with photos of Ms. Sayegh's family and old Jaffa. During the reading, and while showing the photos, the author re-evoked the long history of Jaffa and the economic role it played in early-20th century Palestine, especially thanks to the citrus business which concurred in making Jaffa the privileged entry point to Palestine, besides being an almost obliged destination for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Turning towards the end of the presentation, she recalled the traumatic events that led her family to flee Palestine in 1948, describing, in particular, the fundamental role played by her grandmother in choosing to leave to save their lives. Lastly, she shared her experience of traveling to the Holy Land recently and visiting the family house to retrace her family history while writing the book.

During the **Question-and-Answer** session, Ms. Sayegh was asked about how the book and the history of pre-Nakba Palestine could help better understand the present situation. She responded that her book aimed at raising awareness on the events of 1948 since they were often not taught in schools; the lack of such knowledge was evident during her readings to different audiences in Europe. Furthermore, the book helped the reader debunk the mainstream media representation of the question of Palestine as a religious conflict.

In response to a question, Ms. Sayegh emphasized that one of the most important sections of the book was a passage in which local Jaffa residents were confronted by unusual silence which befell upon the city, following the departure of many Palestinian families fearing for their safety. Asked about what she expected from readers who read the book, the author answered that she hoped her readership reinforces empathy with the Palestinian plight.

In her closing remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** thanked the participants, the Bureau of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. She reminded the UN's responsibility towards reaching a fair solution to the question of Palestine, stressing that it was time for accountability and justice to prevail through addressing the root causes of this situation.

Ambassador Gertze concluded that the book's account highlighted the importance of women's perspectives and contribution to the achievement of a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, until the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. He finally highlighted the future activities of the Committee to commemorate the Nakba, including a special event to be held on 15 May 2023 as mandated by the General Assembly.

Ambassador Gertze closed the event.

XI. UNRWA CALLS ON INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION TO FURTHER SUPPORT PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

On 15 March, Senior Manager for Outreach for Europe Marc Lassouaoui made the following [statement](#) at the Inter-Parliamentary Union 146th General Assembly in Manama, Bahrain.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) participated in the [146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#) in Manama, Bahrain. The delegation, headed by Senior Manager for Outreach Europe Marc Lassouaoui, called on parliamentarians from countries around the globe to support Palestine refugees in the face of multiple crises in the Middle East.

The 146th Assembly of the IPU gathered 137 member Parliaments and a number of associate members and observers globally. The Assembly provided a platform for delegates to deliberate, exchange views about key issues in the global agenda and build bridges at parliamentary level.

During his address to the IPU General Assembly, Mr Lassouaoui said: "UNRWA's financial crisis puts at serious risks the Agency's essential services, including education, primary health care and social services for one of the most vulnerable refugee communities in the world." He added that "parliaments around the world have a role to play in supporting Palestine refugees."

The General Debate focused on the overall theme of 'Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance.' UNRWA highlighted the important role of its [human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance](#) programme in the education of more than half a million Palestine refugee girls and boys in the Middle East. The programme empowers students to enjoy and exercise their rights, uphold human rights values, and contribute positively to their society and the global community.

XII. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CHAIR ADDRESSES ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

On 17 March, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), Amb. Cheikh Niang, addressed the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The [chair's statement](#) is reproduced here.

On behalf of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), I am privileged to address this august gathering of the 49th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

At the outset, let me commend the OIC for its tireless commitment to the Palestine question and its strong partnership with the Committee in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and a just solution for the Palestine question in all its aspects, including support for an annual conference on Jerusalem.

Since the last OIC gathering, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, (OPT) has dramatically worsened. As the peace process remains stalled, tension is high and deadly cycles of violence continue with increased loss of civilian lives. The aggressions by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people have intensified in the recent period.

Addressing the inaugural 2023 Committee meeting, the UN Secretary-General described the situation in the OPT as “near combustion”. In this context, the Committee welcomed the Presidential Statement adopted by the Security Council (S/PRST/2023/1) on 20 February 2023, which the Council supported unanimously, reaffirming the Security Council’s calls for protection of civilians, respect for international law and UN resolutions and support for the two-State solution.

We must follow up this important Security Council step with concrete actions, including calling for an end to Israeli policies and measures and provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric that could further inflame an already volatile situation.

In February 2023, the Committee joined the OIC and others in condemning the repeated deadly Israeli military raids in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in Jenin and Nablus. Such raids, by both security forces and settlers, have continued and include the egregious attack by settlers on Huwwara on 5 March and another military raid on 7 March. Perpetrators of those acts of aggression must be held to account.

Israel’s de facto annexation of Palestinian land through its creeping settlement expansion policy contributes to hopelessness, anger, and despair. As repeatedly stated by the international community, the Committee reiterates that all settlements are illegal under international law, are destroying the two-State solution, and are a stumbling block to peace. All settlement activity must stop.

The Committee has consistently joined the international community in condemning the provocations and acts of violence in and around the Holy Sites, particularly at Al-Aqsa Mosque

compound, that can potentially radiate instability across the region and beyond. It fully aligns with the United Nations' position that Jerusalem's demographic and historical character must be preserved in accordance with international law and the relevant UN resolutions — and the historic status quo at the Holy Sites must be upheld in line with the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Unilateral actions must not be permitted to alter the status of Jerusalem.

The Committee rejects the punitive measures adopted by Israel against the Palestinian Authority for seeking the resolution of international disputes through legitimate and peaceful means via the International Court of Justice (ICJ), one of the main organs of the United Nations, following the request for an advisory opinion by the General Assembly on 30 December 2022. We must ensure that Israel's retaliatory measures do not derail the ICJ process. Furthermore, such punitive measures undermine the Palestinian Authority's ability to provide vital services to its people. The Committee calls on Israel to reverse them immediately.

In response to the ICJ call of 3 February 2023, the Committee invited its Members and Observers to make written submissions to the Court. For this purpose, the Committee offers Member States and the public access to its online UNISPAL database, the largest repository of data on the question of Palestine. Furthermore, the Committee will soon publish a report analyzing the illegality of the Occupation as an additional contribution to the understanding of this situation and to the search for legal remedies.

The Committee also fully supports the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in its efforts to provide vital humanitarian and development assistance to millions of Palestine refugees and its critical role in contributing to stability in the Middle East. Once more we appeal for OIC members to support UNRWA's important mandate and to provide predictable and sustained financial support to the Agency.

The Committee believes that United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements provide the only framework for a resolution to the question of Palestine. It urges the international community and regional partners, including the OIC, to show greater determination in helping to restore a political horizon giving hope to the Palestinian people.

The Committee vows to continue its advocacy and awareness raising and will organize, as requested by the UN General Assembly, the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Nakba with a high-level event at UNHQ on **15 May 2023**. I invite the OIC and all its members to attend and actively participate at the highest level.

Let me conclude by restating the Committee's pledge, in partnership with the wider international community, including the Member States of the OIC, to keep working for a peace that ends the occupation and ensures two states – Israel and an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 lines, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, and a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees in the context of their right of return, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

XIII. UNRWA RESPONDS TO REPORT BY UN WATCH AND IMPACT-SE

On 18 March, Leni Stenseth, UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner-General, issued the following [statement](#).

This week, two organizations released a report criticizing and questioning – once again – the Agency's adherence to UN values and humanitarian principles, including neutrality.

“UNRWA takes each allegation extremely seriously, no matter the source. Investigations are now underway. Should any misconduct be found, UNRWA will take the necessary disciplinary or administrative actions,” said Ms. Stenseth, UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner-General, during a briefing to the Agency's close partners. She also reiterated the full commitment of UNRWA to upholding UN values and humanitarian principles, including neutrality. She confirmed the Agency's zero-tolerance position towards hatred and the promotion of violence.

This latest report parallels these organizations' previous attempts to sensationalize, overstate and sometimes give misguided conclusions derived from what a credible academic [organization](#) described as methodologies “*marked by generalising and exaggerated conclusions based on methodological shortcomings.*” This latest report follows the same pattern. It, for example, does not hesitate, without any verification, to portray people who left the organization more than a decade ago as current UNRWA staff.

Ms. Stenseth confirmed to partners that UNRWA undertakes a range of prevention measures, and that its teams are constantly reminded of their obligations and responsibilities as UN staff. They receive regular in-person training sessions and mandatory online courses on humanitarian principles, social media use, and ethics. In addition, UNRWA undertakes regular and meticulous reviews of all textbooks and learning materials. This is despite significant financial challenges at UNRWA, including the limited number of investigators in the Agency.

In addition, the Deputy Commissioner-General provided partners with context and background -not included in the report- namely the volatility across the region, recurrent escalations and conflicts, the occupation and multiple crises that create heightened political tensions. She also briefed on the engagement of the Agency with UNESCO, the World Bank and other institutions through the “Education Expert Advisory Group”.

Ms. Stenseth concluded that this and previous similar reports have never been submitted to UNRWA for comments prior to publishing, in the way that any credible research organization would invariably require.

XIV. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND BRIEFS THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 2334 (2016)

On 22 March, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, briefed the Security Council ([S/PV.9290](#)).

Before turning to the Secretary-General's report, I would like to note the beginning of the holiday period, when the holy month of Ramadan coincides with Passover and Easter. I extend my good wishes to those who are observing these upcoming holy days. At the outset, I remind all that the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected. This should be a period for safe and peaceful religious reflection and celebrations for all. I urge all sides to refrain from unilateral steps that escalate tensions. I call on all leaders to engage to this end and refrain from provocative actions and messages at this sensitive time. I ask for calm.

I turn now to the Secretary-General's twenty-fifth report on the implementation of resolution [2334](#) (2016), covering the period from 8 December 2022 to 13 March 2023. Resolution (2016) calls on Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard. Settlement activities have, nevertheless, continued during the reporting period.

On 27 December, Israeli settlers took control of a parcel of agricultural land leased by a Palestinian family from the Greek Orthodox Church since 1931 in the Silwan area of occupied East Jerusalem. The settlers maintain that they had purchased the land from the Church, a deal the Church rejected as fraudulent.

On 2 January, the Israeli Government informed the High Court of Justice that it intends to legalize, under Israeli law, the outpost of Homesh, built on private Palestinian-owned land, including by repealing part of the 2005 disengagement law. Relevant legislation is currently being advanced in the Knesset. On the same day, the Court gave the Government 90 days to explain why the outpost should not be evacuated.

On 12 February, the Israeli Government announced that it authorized nine outposts in the occupied West Bank and that the Higher Planning Committee would convene within days to advance settlement housing units. The Committee subsequently advanced plans for over 7,200 settlement housing units, with approximately 4,000 located deep in the occupied West Bank. Nearly 1,000 of these are in outposts that are in the process of legalization under Israeli law.

Following multiple postponements, a meeting of the Higher Planning Committee's Subcommittee for Objections on sensitive E1 settlement plans has been rescheduled for 12 June.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli authorities, citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, demolished, seized or forced people to demolish 331 structures. These actions displaced 388 people, including 89 women and 197 children. A total of 61 structures were donor-funded.

On 7 February, Israel's High Court of Justice gave the Government until 2 April to submit its response to a petition to implement demolition orders for Khan al-Ahmar. The deadline was subsequently extended to 23 April. A hearing is set for 1 May.

On 7 February, Israeli authorities postponed the demolition of a multi-story building housing 74 Palestinians in Silwan in occupied East Jerusalem.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction. Unfortunately, daily violence increased significantly during the reporting period.

Eighty-two Palestinians, including one woman and 17 children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, security operations, attacks against Israelis and other incidents. In all, more than 2,680 Palestinians, including 123 women and 320 children, were injured. Of that number, 308 were injured by live ammunition, while 2,100 became injured from tear gas inhalation. In addition, 4 Palestinians were killed and 89 injured, including 14 women and 12 children, in a growing number of attacks by Israeli settlers, who also caused damage to Palestinian-owned property.

Thirteen Israeli civilians, including one woman, three children and one foreign national were killed, and 49 Israelis, including two women, seven children and six Israeli security forces personnel, were injured by Palestinians in shooting and ramming attacks, clashes and other incidents. The majority of them were stone-throwing attacks against Israelis, including settlers, which resulted in injuries or damage to Israeli-owned property. One Israeli security forces personnel was shot and killed by a fellow soldier in the context of a stabbing attack by a Palestinian.

Israeli security forces carried out 1,084 search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank, resulting in 906 Palestinians arrested, including 133 children. Israel currently holds 967 Palestinians in administrative detention — the highest number in over a decade.

The high number of fatal incidents during the reporting period precludes us from detailing all of them, but allow me to highlight a few.

In four Israeli search-and-arrest operations in Palestinian cities in Area A — on 26 January in Jenin, 6 February in Jericho, 22 February in Nablus and 7 March in Jenin — 33 Palestinians, including a woman, an elderly man and four children, were killed by Israeli security forces amid armed exchanges. Of those killed, Palestinian militant groups have claimed 21 as members. The death toll in Nablus, with 11 Palestinians killed, was the highest recorded by the United Nations in a single West Bank incident since 2005.

The reporting period has also been marked by a spate of violence against civilians, including acts of terror.

In occupied East Jerusalem, six Israelis, including a child and one foreign national, were killed in a Palestinian shooting attack outside a synagogue on 27 January, the highest death toll in an attack against Israelis since 2005, and three Israelis, including two children, were killed in a ramming attack on 10 February in occupied East Jerusalem. Shooting attacks by Palestinians killed

three Israelis, including one dual national, in other parts of the West Bank on 26 and 27 February and seriously injured three others, one of whom later succumbed to his wounds, in Tel Aviv on 9 March.

In separate incidents, two Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli settlers in the course of carrying out stabbing attacks on 11 and 21 January. On 11 February, a third Palestinian was shot by an Israeli settler at close range in a confrontation on the edge of a Palestinian village near Salfit. Following the 26 February killing by a Palestinian of two Israelis from the Har Bracha settlement in Huwwara, hundreds of settlers descended on the West Bank town and neighbouring villages, carrying out, with Israeli security forces present, arson and other attacks. Amid the violence, one Palestinian man was shot and killed, 387 others, including 137 women and 89 children, were injured — one with live ammunition and 377 with tear gas — and extensive damage to Palestinian private property was reported.

In the aftermath of fatal incidents in the West Bank, Palestinian armed groups launched seven rockets from Gaza towards Israel. One fell short within the Strip, one landed in an open space inside Israel, and five were intercepted by the Israeli air defence systems. In retaliation, the Israel Defense Forces conducted two air strikes against what it said were militant targets in Gaza, with no reported injuries.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Unfortunately, such acts continued and intensified.

Some Fatah officials and social media pages, as well as those from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, praised and glorified perpetrators of attacks against Israelis and called for additional attacks. One senior Fatah official called Israel a fascist enemy that loves to murder and spill blood.

An Israeli minister conducted an inflammatory visit to Jerusalem's holy sites. Several Members of the Knesset praised the attacks by settlers against Palestinians and their property in Huwwara, and an Israeli minister said Huwwara should be wiped out by Israeli authorities. Another Member of Knesset called Israeli-Arab colleagues supporters of terrorism and vowed to ban them from the Knesset, while another said they were inhuman and likened them to livestock.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. Notwithstanding some positive steps, negative trends on the ground continued.

On 6 January, the Israeli Government approved a series of measures against the Palestinian Authority (PA), including the transfer of some \$39 million in Palestinian Authority tax revenues withheld by Israel to families of Israelis killed in Palestinian attacks. That measure was in response to the 30 December adoption of General Assembly resolution [77/247](#), requesting an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice relating to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. On 16 January, 39 members signed a joint statement reconfirming support for the International Court of Justice and noting deep concern regarding the Israeli Government's punitive measures.

The Israeli Government announced, on 29 January and 12 February, that following acts of terrorism by Palestinians against Israelis, it would take steps in response, including reinforcing

security forces and broadening operations, strengthening and expanding Israeli settlements and taking punitive measures against the perpetrators and their families.

Following a 1 February announcement by Israel's National Security Minister of new restrictions on Palestinian security prisoners, prisoners launched a mass civil disobedience campaign and announced their intention to begin a hunger strike from tomorrow if restrictions were not eased.

On 2 February, Israel's Finance Minister announced that Israel would double — to approximately \$30 million — the monthly deductions from tax revenues that it withholds based on its law mandating the withholding of what it says the Palestinian Authority pays to perpetrators of attacks against Israelis and their families. The PA's difficult financial situation has resulted in ongoing cuts to public sector salaries. Since early February, Palestinian teachers have conducted strikes demanding salary increases to compensate for the rising cost of living.

On 15 February, the Knesset-approved legislation enabling the revocation of citizenship of Israeli citizens or residents imprisoned for terrorism-related offences who have received money from the Palestinian Authority connected to those offences.

On 23 February, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office announced an agreement between Defence Minister Gallant and Finance Minister Smotrich on the division of responsibilities between them. That agreement reportedly grants Smotrich expanded authority over settlement-related activities and civil affairs in the occupied West Bank.

In Gaza, the United Nations continued to deliver vital humanitarian and development assistance to Palestinians in Gaza and remains engaged with all parties in order to reduce access restrictions to support the Gaza economy and basic service delivery. During the period, a higher flow of people and goods through the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings was witnessed, with Israeli-issued worker and business permits standing today at more than 20,500 — the highest number in years. As at 9 March, the Israeli authorities had enabled 44 previously restricted commodities to enter Gaza without special coordination.

In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council also called upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. No such steps were taken during the reporting period. Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon all parties to continue, inter alia, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations.

On 12 February, the League of Arab States convened in Cairo a high-level conference on Jerusalem, on the theme "Resilience and development". In its final communiqué, participants called for the establishment of a committee of legal experts tasked with helping to bring justice to the Palestinian people and financing a mechanism to support small and medium-sized enterprises.

On 26 February, senior Jordanian, Egyptian, Israeli, Palestinian and United States officials met in Aqaba, Jordan. In a joint communiqué, Israeli and Palestinian participants reaffirmed their commitment to all previous agreements between them and to work towards a just and lasting peace. The parties committed to steps to de-escalate the situation on the ground, pause unilateral measures and prevent further violence, including through upholding the status quo at the holy sites.

On 20 February, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement reaffirming, inter alia, its commitment to the two-State solution; its opposition to unilateral actions, including settlement expansion, and its condemnation of violence against civilians, including acts of terrorism ([S/PRST/2023/1](#)). On 4 and 8 March, respectively, five European Union (EU) countries, plus the United Kingdom, and all 27 EU member States issued statements condemning the increasing violence on the ground and calling for de-escalation.

In conclusion, I would like to share the Secretary-General's observations concerning the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016):

"I remain deeply troubled by continued Israeli settlement expansion, including the recent authorization of nine illegal outposts and the advancement of more than 7,000 settlement housing units, as well as the potential settlement advancement in the E1 area, which is crucial to the contiguity of a future Palestinian State. Settlements further entrench the occupation, fuel tensions and systematically erode the viability of a Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution. Israeli settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law and of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. I call on the Government of Israel to cease all settlement activities immediately, in line with its obligations under international law. The demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures, including the significant increase of such activity in occupied East Jerusalem, entail numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. I call on the Government of Israel to immediately end that practice, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

"I am deeply disturbed by the intensifying cycle of violence that threatens to plunge Palestinians and Israelis deeper into deadly crisis, while further eroding any hope for a political solution. I condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, which have led to an increase in the tragic loss of life. I reiterate that the perpetrators must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. There can be no justification for terrorism or glorification of such acts, which should be clearly condemned by all. I call on leaders on all sides to help calm the situation, avoid spreading inflammatory rhetoric and speak up against those seeking to incite and escalate the situation.

"Israeli security forces operations in the occupied West Bank and subsequent clashes have led to a staggering number of Palestinians killed and injured. I reiterate that the security forces must use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable to protect life, and must promptly and thoroughly investigate all instances of death or injury resulting from its use, holding those responsible to account. I am particularly appalled that children continue to be killed and injured in large numbers. Children must never be the target of violence, used or put in harm's way. I remain deeply concerned by the increase in levels of settler-related violence in the occupied West Bank, sometimes in the proximity of the Israeli security forces. I am particularly appalled by the recent brutal sequence of events in Huwwara. All perpetrators must be held accountable. I urge Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide by its obligations under international law to protect the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence.

"It is critical to de-escalate the situation and move towards re-establishing a political horizon. The statements made by European Member States, the presidential statement and the joint

communiqué from Aqaba are welcome calls for calm. If implemented, the steps outlined in Aqaba could be an important start to reversing negative trends on the ground.

“I am also particularly concerned about steps, incitement and provocations that could escalate tensions in and around the holy sites in Jerusalem. I call upon all to refrain from such actions and to uphold the status quo, in line with the special and historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

“In Gaza, a fragile calm continues, but the risk of escalation persists. Despite improvements in access and movement, much more remains to be done to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation and improve the economy, with the ultimate goal of lifting the debilitating closures, in line with resolution [1860](#) (2009).

“The absence of intra-Palestinian unity continues to undermine Palestinian national aspirations. I call upon all factions to take concrete steps towards reuniting Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, under a single, democratic Government. Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution.

“I am concerned by the critical condition of the Palestinian economy, which is affecting the Palestinian Authority’s ability to deliver services and pay public sector salaries. The implications of Israel’s announced increase in monthly deductions from Palestinian clearance revenues add to an already very difficult situation. I urge the parties to work together to find urgent and sustainable solutions. I call on the international community to redouble efforts to strengthen the Palestinian Authority’s fiscal and institutional health.

“I call on all Member States to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East with sustainable funding sources to protect the delivery of vital services to millions of Palestine refugees. That is crucial for stability throughout the region.

“I remain committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis in resolving the conflict and ending the occupation in line with international law, the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and bilateral agreements in pursuit of the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestine — 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.

“Lastly, there is no substitute for a legitimate political process that will resolve the core issues driving the conflict. Efforts to manage the conflict are not a substitute for real progress towards resolving it. I urge Israelis, Palestinians, the States of the region and the broader international community to take steps to re-engage on meaningful negotiations and, ultimately, peace.”

XV. RAMADAN MESSAGE FROM UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL LAZZARINI

On 23 March, the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, issued the following [statement](#).

The Holy month of Ramadan is here.

All my warmest wishes for a blessed, Holy month to you and your families.

Ramadan is the month of peace and tolerance. It is a time for families to come together to share their food and their faith.

Since my message to you at the end of last year, the region has continued to live through hardship, conflicts, turmoil, poverty and injustice.

Palestine Refugees continue to be one of the most vulnerable communities in the region.

UNRWA- meanwhile- continued to support them, through its teachers, doctors, sanitation laborers, social workers and other staff.

In the West Bank, 46 Palestine refugees were killed this year alone. Palestine refugee camps continue to endure unprecedented levels of violence.

As the region marked Mother's Day this week, I think about all the mothers who lost children and the grief and pain of many Palestinian families who lost loved ones.

In Syria, after 12 years of brutal conflict, a devastating earthquake shattered the lives of thousands of people among them Palestine refugees.

In Gaza, people continue to be trapped in a crippling blockade.

In Lebanon, Palestine refugees are braving the harshest economic crisis in over 100 years.

And finally in Jordan, people are struggling to make ends meet amid high levels of unemployment and very narrow prospects for economic recovery after the pandemic.

Over the last six months, I have met my UNRWA colleagues in Balata and Aqbat Jabr camps in the West Bank, Raffah and Deir El-Balah camps in Gaza, Yarmouk, Neirab and Ein El Tal camps in Syria, Beddawi and Burj Barajneh camps in Lebanon and Zarqa camp in Jordan.

In the middle of these challenges, it is always a true privilege to witness your determination, perseverance and hard work. Through your dedication, Palestine refugees receive services that help them achieve their right to a dignified life, Bi-Karama.

It has always been my and my senior management's priority to ensure that all salaries to all personnel continue without interruption or reduction, despite the huge financial challenges that UNRWA continues to face. I firmly believe that prioritizing the full and timely payment of salaries is a staff right that should never be questioned or compromised.

The last few months have been very difficult in the Agency. The strike in the West Bank is depriving over 900,000 refugees of critical services. It means that over 40,000 children are not in schools, over 46,000 patients of Non-Communicable Diseases are not receiving medicines. Solid waste is accumulating, and the most vulnerable refugees are not receiving referral services.

In all my visits to Palestine refugee families and in discussions with colleagues, I see firsthand how difficult it has become to maintain living standards and support families.

You have heard me repeat to the Agency's partners and donors the seriousness of our financial crisis. You have also heard me repeat to them that my priority will always be to protect the services to Palestine refugees and salaries to staff. And you have seen regular incremental increases in your salaries, despite the immense financial challenges.

I intend to bring this conversation to the attention of the UNRWA Advisory Committee members to discuss future options that enable the delivery of services to Palestine refugees, respect the rights of staff and allow for the financial sustainability of the Agency.

In the spirit of the Holy month, I appeal to our staff who are on strike to bring it to an end today.

This will allow us to continue all our operations: programmes and administrative alike.

We will all enjoy this Holy month with our families and loved ones without any interruption and in line with the spirit of peace and tolerance of this holy month.

I, and the senior UNRWA management at UNRWA, are committed to find a solution that has at its heart the benefit of the people we are all here to serve: the Palestine Refugees.

XVI. OIC CONDEMNS THE ISRAELI APPROVAL OF A PLAN TO BUILD NEW SETTLEMENT UNITS

On 25 March, the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation issued the following [statement](#).

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the bidding by the Israeli occupation authorities for the construction of more than a thousand new settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, stressing that the colonial settlement policy is illegal and constitutes a gross violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially the Security Council resolution No. (2334).

The OIC also renewed its strong rejection and condemnation of the Israeli Knesset's decision to cancel the "disengagement law" and legitimize colonial settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. At the same time, the OIC called on the international actors to shoulder their responsibilities in enforcing the resolutions of international legitimacy, and to exercise pressure on Israel, the occupying power, to stop its aggressions and its continuous violations against the Palestinian people, its land and sanctities.

XVII. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL LAZZARINI WELCOMES EXTENSION OF HIS MANDATE

On 28 March, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini issued the following [press release](#).

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Philippe Lazzarini, welcomed the renewal of his mandate by the UN Secretary-General, saying he was “honoured” by the decision.

This is Lazzarini’s second three-year term at UNRWA, one of the largest UN agencies in the world. With 8,000 staff members, UNRWA delivers critical services including health, education, social protection, camp infrastructure and sanitation, among others, to millions of Palestine refugees. The Agency operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

“I am honoured by the decision of Secretary-General Guterres and his confidence in me at a time of immense challenges in the region,” Lazzarini said. “I also am grateful for the support expressed by the UN Member States, the host countries in the region, and our donors and partners.”

As he starts his second term, Lazzarini pledged to keep working tirelessly to provide continued access of Palestine refugees to UNRWA services per the Agency’s mandate and reinforce the trust of the international community in UNRWA. He is committed to improving and modernizing the quality of the services, including through digitalization.

“I look forward to continuing to work with my dedicated colleagues, most of whom are Palestine refugees, so we can face and overcome challenges together,” said the Commissioner-General. “At the centre of all our efforts are the rights of Palestine refugees, until there is a just and lasting solution to their plight.”

XVIII. OIC STRONGLY CONDEMNS STORMING OF THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE BY EXTREMIST SETTLERS PROTECTED BY THE ISRAELI FORCES

On 29 March, the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation issued the following [statement](#).

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the extremist settlers’ storming of the courtyards of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces, and the continuation of their daily attacks on Palestinian citizens.

The OIC General Secretariat further considers this dangerous escalation an assault on the sanctity of the holy sites and freedom of worship, and a flagrant violation of international law, the Geneva Conventions and relevant United Nations resolutions.

While reaffirming that the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Holy Mosque in its entirety, is a pure place of worship for Muslims, the OIC called on the active parties of the international community

to assume their responsibilities towards pressuring Israel, the occupying power, to stop these repeated attacks and violations, respect the sanctity of the holy sites, and preserve the legal and historical status of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

XIX. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ALBANESE CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF PALESTINIANS

On 30 March, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, issued the following [statement](#).

At a moment of increased violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, with the new Israeli government threatening even further annexation, the international community must take firm and principled action to protect the human rights and dignity of Palestinians, a UN expert said today.

“The wave of deadly violence sweeping through the occupied West Bank since the beginning of this year is the inexorable consequence of an acquisitive and repressive occupation with no end in sight, and the culture of lawlessness and impunity Israel has nurtured and enjoyed,” said Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Israeli violence, including the deadly raid operations in Jenin refugee camp on 26 January, in the old city of Nablus on 22 February, and Jericho on 1 March have left a devastating toll of 80 Palestinians dead and over 2,000 wounded in less than 90 days. During the same period, 13 Israelis were killed by Palestinians. Israel’s deliberate and systemic destruction of homes, civilian infrastructure and property amidst hostile anti-Palestinian rhetoric and declared plans to further annex Palestinian lands, has compounded the sense of despair of the occupied population.

“Every loss of life, whether Palestinian or Israeli, is a tragic reminder of the price people pay for not addressing pervasive injustice and its root causes,” the Special Rapporteur said.

The international community has witnessed decades of record-high numbers of Palestinian deaths and injuries in the occupied territory. Meanwhile, Palestinians have also endured confinement, land confiscation, home demolitions, fragmentation, discriminatory law enforcement, mass incarceration and other countless abuses, indignities and humiliations, the expert said.

“Israel, emboldened by a lack of meaningful intervention, has consolidated its acquisitive and repressive occupation, with Member States offering little more than symbolic condemnation, humanitarians providing band-aid aid, and legal scholars entangled in theoretical debates,” Albanese said.

The Special Rapporteur urged the UN to move beyond simply counting casualties and calling for restraint. “The organization cannot indulge in the condescending acceptance of an irresolvable ‘conflict’ and the myth of conflicting narratives, and in urging the ‘parties’ to ‘de-escalate tensions’ and ‘resume negotiations’,” Albanese said. “In reality, there are no equal parties nor a proper ‘conflict,’ but rather an oppressive regime that threatens the right of an entire people to exist.”

“Tolerating annexation would legitimise aggression, bringing international law back almost a century: this is the reality the international community must stop immediately and reverse.”

“To maintain its credibility and purpose, the UN must acknowledge that conflicting narratives and historical facts must be resolved through the lens of legality and justice, and work effectively to oppose any forms of annexation of occupied territory, realise the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and terminate the apartheid regime Israel is enforcing upon them,” the expert said.

“As ‘We the peoples of the United Nations,’ we must not remain silent in the face of egregious violations. The international community must recommit to the ideals of the UN Charter, in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis,” the Special Rapporteur said.
