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SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
UNSCR 2334 (2016)
28 September 2022

Mister President,

Members of the Security Council,

Today's briefing is devoted to the 23rd report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The reporting period is from 17 June to 20 September.

Mister President,

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” and to “fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.” Settlement activity has, nevertheless, continued during the reporting period.

Between 19 and 21 July, Israeli settlers erected tents across the occupied West Bank, in a widely publicized campaign by a settlement organization to establish new outposts. Israeli authorities subsequently removed the encampments because they were illegal under Israeli law.

On 25 July, Israeli authorities advanced plans for the construction of 1,215 housing units at the Lower Aqueduct site, adjacent to Kibbutz Ramat Rachel and the Palestinian neighborhood of Umm Tuba. Some units are intended for construction across the Green Line in occupied East Jerusalem.

On 27 July, Israel's Supreme Court reversed its ruling ordering the evacuation of settlers from the illegal outpost of Mitzpeh Kramim, near Ramallah. The Court accepted the Government's argument that the Palestinian land had been allocated to the settlers in “good faith” and that the principle of so-called “market regulation” should be applied.

On 28 July, Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, moved into an empty Palestinian-owned house in the H2 area of Hebron. This is the second takeover of a Palestinian home in H2 this year.

On 5 September, Israeli authorities advanced plans for some 700 units in the planned East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hashaked, adjacent to the Palestinian neighborhoods of Beit Safafa and Sharafat

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 316 structures. These actions displaced 237 people, including 116 children. Forty-one structures were donor-funded.

On 21 July, Israel's Supreme Court partially accepted the appeal of a Palestinian family under threat of eviction in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, freezing the eviction order until proceedings are completed in a lower court.

On 25 July and 8 August, Israeli security forces demolished four homes belonging to family members of Palestinians accused of or indicted for killing Israelis in April and May 2022, displacing 31 people, including 13 children.

Israeli pressure on two Palestinian communities to leave their homes in Area C continued to mount. On 12 July, 16 of the 35 households comprising the herding community of Ras al Tin left the area after facing settler-related violence, demolitions, and confiscations. In Masafer Yatta movement restrictions, including for humanitarian access, and arrests against Palestinian residents continued. On 8 September, Israel's Supreme Court upheld the military commander's decision to reject planning permission requested by a Masafer Yatta community. The court ordered a stay on demolition orders until 29 September. On 12 July, Israeli authorities announced that they would advance six plans for Palestinian construction in Area C.

Mister President,

Security Council 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 continued.

Overall, in the West Bank, 29 Palestinians, including six children, were killed and 1,813 Palestinians, including 27 women and 194 children were injured by Israeli security forces (ISF) during security operations, demonstrations, clashes, stone-throwing incidents, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis, and other incidents. Of these, 1,206 injuries were due to tear gas inhalation while 202 were injured by live ammunition. In addition, Israeli settlers or other civilians perpetrated 128 attacks against Palestinians resulting in one death and 51 injuries and/or damage to Palestinian property.

In Gaza, during the August escalation between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, 49 Palestinians were killed, of whom at least 26 were civilians, including four women and seventeen children. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 360 Palestinians were injured, including 151 children and 58 women. Israeli officials reported two Israelis moderately injured and at least 62 lightly injured, including nine children. Ten houses in Gaza were completely destroyed and 48 severely damaged and rendered uninhabitable. According to the Gaza authorities, over 600 housing units were damaged, displacing 84 families.

One Israeli civilian and one Israeli security forces personnel was killed, and 49 Israelis, as well as two Israeli security forces personnel were injured by Palestinians in clashes, rock and Molotov

cocktail throwing, attacks and other incidents. The majority of those were stone-throwing attacks against Israelis, including settlers, that resulted in injuries or damage to Israeli-owned property.

Israeli security forces carried out 906 search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank, resulting in 1528 Palestinians arrested.

On 19 June, Israeli security forces shot and killed an unarmed 53-year-old Palestinian while he was attempting to enter Israel, reportedly for work, through a breach in the Separation Barrier near Qalqiliya.

On 24 June, a 16-year-old Palestinian was killed by ISF while throwing stones in Silwad village near Ramallah.

In the village of Jab'a, near Jenin, on 2 July, ISF shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian, after he reportedly threw a Molotov cocktail, and in a separate incident, on 6 July, killed another Palestinian as he was running away during a search operation.

On 5 July, an Israeli man was seriously injured after being stabbed in Bnei Brak in central Israel. ISF arrested a Palestinian man suspected of carrying out the attack.

On 19 July, an Israeli was stabbed and injured by a Palestinian on a bus in Jerusalem. The assailant was subsequently shot and injured by an Israeli civilian.

On 26 July, ISF shot an unarmed 59-year-old Palestinian man with a mental disability at Huwwara checkpoint, south of Nablus. The man subsequently died of his injuries.

On 9 August, four Palestinians, including a senior militant commander and a 16-year-old, were killed by ISF in Nablus, and 76 injured with live ammunition during a search operation and subsequent clashes. The same day a 16-year-old was killed by ISF in Hebron while throwing stones.

On 14 August, a Palestinian opened fire at a group of Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem's Old City. Eight civilians, including a pregnant woman, were injured, two seriously. The assailant was arrested.

On 15 August, ISF shot and killed a Palestinian during a search operation and subsequent clashes in Kufr Aqab, north of Jerusalem. ISF said that the man was attempting to stab officers. An eyewitness denied the allegation.

On 17 August near Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, ISF shot and killed a Palestinian and injured three others with live ammunition in clashes, after Palestinians threw stones and reportedly fired on buses transporting Jewish worshippers to the site, in accordance with established procedures. On 30 August, Palestinians opened fire at the car of five Jewish worshippers, injuring two, as they entered the site in Area A without prior coordination, which is illegal under Israeli law.

On 19 August, an unarmed 58-year-old Palestinian man, an apparent bystander to an armed exchange, was shot and killed in Tubas during an ISF search operation.

On 6 September, ISF shot and killed a Palestinian man live-broadcasting a punitive demolition and related clashes in Jenin. Sixteen other Palestinians were injured with live ammunition during the clashes, one of whom subsequently died.

On 8 September, a 16-year-old Palestinian attacked and lightly injured an ISF personnel with a hammer before being shot and killed by ISF.

On 13 September, an ISF officer and two armed Palestinian men were killed in an exchange of fire near Jalama checkpoint in Jenin. One of the Palestinians killed was an intelligence officer in the Palestinian Security Forces.

On 15 September, ISF shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian attempting to launch a Molotov cocktail during clashes in Kafr Dan, near Jenin.

On 19 September, clashes erupted between Palestinian Security Forces (PSF) and armed Palestinians in Nablus following the arrest of two suspected Hamas militants by PSF. One Palestinian man was killed during an exchange of fire. Clashes continued over the following day; eight Palestinians and one PSF officer were injured by live ammunition.

On 20 September, a Palestinian from the occupied West Bank struck and killed an 84-year-old woman with a metal bar in Holon, in central Israel. The following day, police discovered the body of the Palestinian in Tel Aviv.

Settler-related violence continued in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

On 21 June, as Israeli settlers set up tents on Palestinian-owned property near the village of Iskaka in Salfit, a settler stabbed and killed an unarmed Palestinian man, in the presence of ISF. Israeli police arrested a suspect but no charges were filed.

On 29 July, a 15-year-old Palestinian was shot outside al-Mughhayyir village, near Ramallah, during a confrontation between Palestinians and armed Israeli settlers, accompanied by ISF. The boy subsequently died. Witnesses said he had been throwing stones and was shot in the back while running away. It is unclear who fired the shot.

On 12 September, five Israeli settlers attacked and injured a 55-year-old Palestinian on his land near At Tuwani, south of Hebron. ISF subsequently arrested the Palestinian man.

On 15 September, a group of 15 Israeli settlers, in the presence of ISF, attacked a group of 10 Palestinian men northeast of Sinjil village, near Ramallah. Three Palestinians were injured. The next day, Palestinian protestors clashed with settlers and ISF in Sinjil village; four Palestinians were injured, including two by live ammunition, and two Israelis were injured by stone-throwing.

Madam President,

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Some Palestinian and Israeli officials continued to engage in such activity during the reporting period.

Several Members of Knesset (MK) issued provocative and inflammatory statements regarding Palestinian leadership. A senior Member of Knesset said on social media that, after a decade, his party had “removed the Palestinian issue from the international agenda,” only for his political rivals to bring “Abu Mazen, who doesn’t stop inciting for the murder of Israelis, to the international stage.” Another referred to President Abbas as a “terrorist. One Knesset Member alongside 100 supporters raised Israeli flags and threw stone and bottles in a Palestinian village at some 25 residents and Israeli peace activists.

Several PLO and Fatah officials praised or glorified perpetrators of terrorist attacks against Israelis. One official praised a Palestinian imprisoned for killing three Israeli civilians and seven soldiers in a shooting attack in 2003, calling the attack “a milestone in proactive national action.” Ahead of the August escalation, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader in Gaza threatened, “We have every right to bomb Israel with our most advanced weapons, and make the occupier pay a heavy price. We...we will bomb the center of the so-called State of Israel.”

Mister President,

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for “affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution.”

On 7 July, President Abbas and Defense Minister Gantz met in Ramallah, and on 8 July Israeli President Herzog and Prime Minister Lapid spoke with President Abbas by phone.

During his 13-15 July visit to Israel and the OPT, U.S. President Biden announced, *inter alia*: a USD 100 million contribution to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network; USD 201 million for UNRWA; USD 15 million to address food insecurity; two new grants under the Middle East Partnership for Peace Act; and an agreement to speed 4G deployment in the West Bank and Gaza.

As of the end of the reporting period, some 16,000 workers and other business permits have been issued by Israel for Palestinians in Gaza. On 1 August, social entitlements under Israeli labor law were extended to workers entering Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Kerem Shalom crossing saw a 1.5 per cent rise in imports and 54 per cent rise in exports compared to the monthly average in the first two quarters of 2022.

From 3-8 August, before and during the Gaza escalation, Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings were closed, except for some urgent humanitarian cases. At least 194 patients were unable to access specialized healthcare and the Gaza power plant ceased operations for two days, affecting hospitals and other basic services. On 9 August, movement through both crossings returned to pre-escalation levels.

On 28 July, Israel’s Ministry of Education announced that it had given instructions to halt the granting of permanent licenses to six Palestinian-run schools in occupied East Jerusalem, due to what it said was incitement against Israel in the school curriculum. On 19 September, Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem went on strike to protest the move. If a solution is not found, more than 2,000 Palestinian students will be impacted.

On 17 August, the IDF Military Commander rejected objections by five non-governmental organizations against their proscription as “unlawful associations”. That same day, Israel’s Defense Minister announced that “terrorist” designations issued in October 2021 against three of these organizations had been made permanent. Three others have appealed their designations in Israel.

On 18 August Israeli security forces ordered the closure of the offices of seven NGOs that Israel has designated as “terrorist or otherwise unlawful associations” and searched their offices in Ramallah, damaging and confiscating some property, including confidential casefiles on children and gender-based violence. Israeli authorities also summoned the directors of three of the organizations for questioning.

On 30 August, Mohammed el-Halabi, the former Director of World Vision in Gaza, was sentenced to 12 years in prison, inclusive of time served. He was convicted of 13 counts of terrorism-related crimes, despite concerns of serious procedural irregularities. El-Halabi has maintained his innocence and said that he will appeal to the Supreme Court.

Madam President,

In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called upon all States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.” 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.” No such steps were taken during the reporting period.

Madam President,

In closing, allow me to share the Secretary-General’s observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

1. I remain deeply troubled by continued Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and attempts by some Israelis to further expand the settlement footprint through the establishment of outposts which are illegal also under Israeli law. I am also concerned that the Supreme Court’s Mitzpeh Kramim decision could set precedent for the legalization of additional outposts under Israeli law. I reiterate that Israeli settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. I call on the Government of Israel to cease all settlement activity immediately.
2. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property remain a serious concern. I am particularly concerned by the ongoing situation in Masafer Yatta, where over 1,000 Palestinians, including 569 children, are at imminent risk of eviction. I urge Israeli authorities to cease immediately the demolition of Palestinian-owned property and the forcible displacement and eviction of Palestinians, in line with Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to approve plans that would enable Palestinians to build legally and address their development needs.

3. I am deeply concerned by the tragic civilian deaths and injuries, including of children, caused by the latest escalation in Gaza. Israel must abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the proportional use of force, and take all feasible precautions to spare civilians and civilian objects during military operations. Further, I condemn the indiscriminate launching of rockets by Palestinian armed groups from highly populated neighborhoods in Gaza into civilian population centers in Israel, which also resulted in casualties and violates international humanitarian law and puts the lives of civilians at risk.
4. I am gravely concerned by the deteriorating security situation in the occupied West Bank, including the increase in attacks and armed exchanges between Israelis and Palestinians.
5. The high number of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains deeply troubling, particularly reports that some did not appear to pose a threat. The possible excessive use of force by Israeli security forces continues to raise serious concerns, particularly the use of live ammunition. Security forces must use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable to protect life and must promptly, thoroughly investigate all instances of death or injury resulting from its use, and hold those responsible accountable.
6. I am particularly appalled that children continue to be killed and injured in large numbers. Children must never be the target of violence or put in harm's way.
7. I remain deeply concerned by the high levels of settler-related violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, which often occur in the presence of Israeli security forces. I urge Israel to abide by their obligations under international law to protect the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence, to ensure that all attacks are investigated promptly and transparently and to hold perpetrators to account.
8. I condemn all acts of terrorism against civilians, including the 14 August attack targeting Jewish worshippers near Jerusalem's Old City. The glorification of such acts is unacceptable and further undermines the possibility of a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.
9. I am deeply troubled by the ISF search and closure of offices of seven Palestinian NGOs. I remain concerned about the shrinking space for civil society in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
10. I reiterate my call for the parties to respect and uphold the status quo, taking into account the special and historic role of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

11. The absence of intra-Palestinian unity continues to undermine Palestinian national aspirations and prevent a common Palestinian approach towards resolving the conflict and addressing the needs of the population. I call upon all Palestinian factions to redouble efforts to reunite Gaza and the occupied West Bank, under a single, democratic, national government. Gaza is, and must remain, an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution. It is also crucial that Palestinians hold elections – not only a key step towards Palestinian unity, but also as a means to renew legitimacy of national institutions.
12. I welcome U.S. and regional support pledged to East Jerusalem hospitals, that are vital Palestinian institutions. Israel's commitment to improve movement and access for Palestinians at Allenby Bridge and the transition to 4G technology to support economic growth is also important and welcomed. I call on the Member States to support UNRWA with sustainable funding sources to protect the delivery of vital services to millions of Palestine refugees. This is crucial to upholding their rights and supporting the stabilizing role of the Agency in the region.
13. In Gaza, the humanitarian and economic situation remains dire, although some important improvements have taken place in access and movement, particularly an increase of permits for Palestinians from Gaza to work in Israel. The limited availability of key materials and equipment coupled with cumbersome protocols and restrictions continue to impede private sector development, job creation and economic growth. I encourage the parties to solidify the ceasefire and enable further economic development. Ultimately, the debilitating Israeli closures should be lifted, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).
14. The current negative trajectory puts at great risk the socioeconomic and institution-building that has prepared the Palestinian Authority for statehood. There must be a bridge between these immediate challenges and the longer-term objective of achieving the vision of two States – Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State – living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.
15. I welcome the four strategic elements put forward in UNSCO's report to the Ad-hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) on 22 September for a comprehensive package of incremental, durable, and meaningful steps that the parties and their partners should take to address the current situation, strengthen the PA, and advance the goal of a sustainable peace: (i) address the continuing drivers of conflict and instability; (ii) strengthen Palestinian institutions and address the challenge of Palestinian governance; (iii) improve access, movement, and trade and thereby create space for the Palestinian economy to grow; and (iv) better align the framework of economic and administrative relationships with the economic transformations of the past decades.

Mister President,

Before closing, I wish to note a few important developments during this year's opening of the General Assembly just after the close of the reporting period. Firstly, I commend Prime Minister Yair Lapid's reaffirmation of support to two-States made during his statement on 22 September. I also wish to acknowledge President Mahmoud Abbas's continued commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as his urgent appeal to re-establish a political horizon made in his address on the 23rd of this month.

On the margins, a number of important meetings took place including a meeting on the Arab Peace Initiative co-hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the European Union, a ministerial meeting of the Munich format, a Jordanian and Swedish co-hosted event in support of UNRWA and the Norwegian-chaired Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which focused on preserving the viability of the two-State solution and moving the state-building process forward.

Returning to my closing, we continue to see little progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 since its adoption in December 2016.

The absence of a meaningful peace process to end the Israeli occupation and resolve the conflict is fueling a dangerous deterioration across the OPT, particularly in the West Bank, and driving the perception that the conflict is unresolvable.

Israelis and Palestinians must determine how they envision the future. Negotiations can no longer be pushed off indefinitely. The current course is leading us towards a perpetual state of violence and conflict. Meaningful initiatives are needed to turn the current trajectory around and they are needed quickly.

Ending the occupation and realizing a two-State solution must drive our collective efforts.

I remain actively engaged in advancing these objectives with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and with key international and regional partners.

Thank you.