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**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON THE SITUATION IN JERUSALEM
29 OCTOBER 2014**

Madam President,

1. We meet today in light of worrisome developments in Jerusalem, including growing violence and renewed settlement activities. On 27 October, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations submitted two identical letters to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council “to demand that Israel rescind its plans and cease forthwith all of its illegal settlement activities and all other provocations and incitement throughout the Palestinian land including in occupied East Jerusalem.”

2. Most recently, in his 21 October briefing to the Council, the Secretary-General stressed his deep concerns about continued Israeli settlement activity, particularly plans to construct residential housing units in occupied East Jerusalem. He also urged the Israeli Government to reverse these activities. Regrettably, since then there have been troubling new reports of settlement activity taking place in East Jerusalem.

3. The Secretary-General is alarmed by new reports about the advancement of planning for some 1,000 Israeli settlements units in occupied East Jerusalem. These include approximately 400 units in Har Homa and 600 in Ramat Shlomo. This latest development follows on the heels of Israel’s decision at the end of September to accelerate the process of constructing some 2,600 residential units in Givat Hamatos, also in East Jerusalem.

4. If pursued, these plans would once again raise grave doubts about Israel's commitment to achieving durable peace with the Palestinians as the new settlements threaten the very viability of the future State of Palestine.

5. As affirmed by the Council and determined by the International Court of Justice, Israel's policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in the occupied Palestinian territory, including occupied East Jerusalem, are in violation of international law. As the Secretary-General has consistently reiterated, it also runs contrary to the two-state solution.

6. Once again, the Secretary-General calls on Israel to reverse these activities, heed the calls of the international community to freeze settlement activity and abide by its commitments under international law and the Quartet Road map.

Madam President,

7. Heightened tensions over unilateral actions, provocations and access restrictions at the holy sites in Jerusalem are continuing and the situation remains volatile. In the past week, some 13 Palestinians have reportedly been arrested at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount Compound, including one Palestinian on 22 October for allegedly throwing stones at Jewish visitors. Israeli police officers have also been injured as a result of clashes. We note that, in the aftermath of these clashes, Prime Minister Hamdallah visited Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount on 27 October.

8. The Secretary-General has reiterated the importance of respect for the religious freedom of all, and for worshippers of all faiths to have access to their holy sites, while noting that religious and other leaders should also refrain from

inflammatory statements. In this regard, the Government of Israel's reassurances to the Secretary-General, and reportedly to Jordan, that it has no plans to change long standing policies governing the Holy Sites are noted. We also note that Israel, as per its agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, has committed to work to ensure the protection of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the Old city and the safety of the worshippers. Incitement of violence from any quarter must cease and the sanctity of holy sites of all faiths must be respected.

9. The Secretary-General will be closely following developments at these sacred places that have such significance to millions around the world.

10. The situation in the rest of East Jerusalem has grown more tense since 21 October. On 22 October a Palestinian man drove his car into a light rail train station near Ammunition Hill and ran over passengers disembarking from the train, killing a three-month-old baby and injuring six other people one of whom succumbed to her injuries later. The driver was shot dead by Israeli police as he tried to flee the scene. It is our understanding that Israeli authorities are investigating this incident as what they describe as a potential terrorist attack. Regrettably, some on the Palestinian side have praised this attack.

11. Clashes took place during the burial of the Palestinian man on 26 October. On the same day Prime Minister Netanyahu stated at a cabinet meeting that Israel would not allow the stone and firebomb throwing to continue and that an additional 1,000 security forces would be deployed in East Jerusalem. The Prime Minister also reportedly requested legislation to raise the terms of punishment for stone throwing, including criteria for the possible imposition of economic sanctions on the parents of minors who throw stones.

12. Tensions have also escalated in the rest of the West Bank as well where Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian-American teenager on 24 October in Silwad village near Ramallah, reportedly following stone and Molotov cocktail throwing during a demonstration. On 27 October, Israeli forces detained 14 Palestinians for alleged stone throwing. On 28 October, four Palestinians were reportedly shot and injured by Israeli security forces in Jenin, including one in critical condition.

13. Tensions also rose from the reported demolition in the past week of five Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Al-Tur and Silwan as well as in Salah Eddine Street and following news that a Palestinian held under administrative detention in Israel and on hunger strike for 37 days was moved to hospital on 27 October after his health deteriorated.

Madam President,

14. I would like to underscore the criticality of immediately diffusing the escalating tensions in East Jerusalem without delay. The wounds from the devastating conflict in Gaza are only just beginning to heal - with the tripartite temporary mechanism for the delivery of reconstruction materials into Gaza brokered by the United Nations only starting to take effect. The parties can ill-afford to, once more, take unilateral actions that serve only to inflame tensions and further entrench the suspicion and hostility that have been the tragic narrative of this conflict for decades. The reality is that continued settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territory is doing significant damage to any possibility of a lasting peace between the two sides and is moving the situation ever closer to a one-state reality.

15. Ongoing tensions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank cannot be separated from the larger reality that remains unresolved. As the Secretary-General has frequently conveyed, any enduring peace will require starting dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict including an end to the occupation that has lasted close to 50 years and also effectively addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

16. I wish to recall that on 26 September 2008, during the High Level meeting of the Security Council on settlements, the then Secretary-General of League of Arab States, Mr. Amr Moussa, recalled that two years earlier the Security Council had "recorded a consensus on the need of reviving the peace process with the express goal of establishing a viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, with, of course, East Jerusalem as its capital". Such consensus was echoed in the Arab Peace initiative and the understanding that there would be an immediate and complete halt to settlement activities as per the road map. Eight years later, we must ask ourselves why there has been little progress and how to move the peace process forward.

17. We understand that some Members of the Council have started again discussing the possibility of adopting a new resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. From our part, we wonder if the current paradigm, almost 50 years into the conflict, does not require revisiting our engagement thus far, consistent with the decisions of the Security Council and the relentless efforts of the international community. Palestinian and Israeli leaders and people should make no mistake: there will never be a substitute to their own responsibility in bringing the necessary change and achieving peace. The United Nations stands ready to lend its full support to such collective efforts.

18. In conclusion, Madam President, the status quo is not a viable option. Further delay in the pursuit of peace will only exacerbate the conflict further and deepen divisions. Now is the time for bold leadership, for both sides to fully commit to meaningful negotiations that will allow the establishment of two-states living side by side in peace and security. Ignoring the calls from the international community for such negotiations for whatever reasons will only breed more violence in the region that has already seen too much of it.

Thank you, Madam President.