

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**NOTES AND REMARKS**

**AT OPENING OF THE 2023 SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF  
THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**New York, 22 February 2023**

***[As delivered]***

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my privilege to join this meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I congratulate the Chair, Ambassador Cheikh Niang, and other members of the Bureau on your election. And I commend all of you for your tireless commitment.

We meet as the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is at its most combustible in years.

Just this morning, we had more deeply concerning news.

An operation by Israeli security forces and ensuing clash in Nablus left ten Palestinians dead and over 80 injured.

Deadly cycles of violence keep accelerating. Tensions are sky high. And the peace process remains stalled.

The situation in Jerusalem/Al-Quds is becoming more fragile amidst provocations and acts of violence in and around the Holy Sites.

It radiates instability across the region and beyond.

The position of the United Nations is clear: The status of Jerusalem cannot be altered by unilateral actions.

Jerusalem's demographic and historical character must be preserved – and the status quo at the Holy Sites must be upheld, in line with the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Excellencies,

2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians since OCHA began systematically tracking fatalities in 2005.

Two months into the new year, violence rages on without reprieve.

Across the occupied West Bank and Gaza, hopelessness is spreading, feeding anger and despair.

Each new settlement is another roadblock on the path to peace.

All settlement activity is illegal under international law. And it must stop.

At the same time, incitement to violence is a dead end.

Nothing justifies terrorism. It must be rejected by all.

Our immediate priority must be to prevent further escalation, reduce tensions and restore calm.

Excellencies,

I am deeply concerned by Israel's recent punitive measures against the Palestinian Authority following the resolution of the General Assembly seeking an International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the occupation.

There should be no retaliation with respect to the Palestinian Authority in relation to the International Court of Justice.

These measures risk further destabilizing the Palestinian Authority at a time when it is already struggling with a dire fiscal crisis that is undermining its ability to provide services to people.

Meanwhile, another vital lifeline for Palestinians – UNWRA – continues to confront the impossible task of meeting soaring needs with stagnating funding.

And yet UNRWA remains remarkably resilient, high-performing, and highly cost-effective.

I urge all donors to live up to their commitments and ensure UNRWA has the predictable and sustained support it needs to fulfil its critical mission.

In this context, let me also note the importance of easing the movement of goods and people in and out of the Gaza Strip.

I reiterate my call to work towards a full lifting of the debilitating closures in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1860.

Excellencies,

Our ultimate goals remain unchanged: end the occupation, realize a two-state solution.

But we must face today's reality.

The truth is that trends on the ground mean time is working against us.

The longer we go without meaningful political negotiations, the further these goals slip from the reach.

Regional and international partners must collectively work – with greater urgency and determination – to help Palestinians and Israelis restore a credible political horizon.

The outlines of the solution are clear – they are laid out in United Nations resolutions, international law, and bilateral agreements.

What is needed is the political will and courage to make the difficult choices for peace.

A peace that ends the occupation and ensures two states – Israel and an independent, viable, and sovereign Palestinian state – living side by side within secure and recognized borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.

A peace in which Palestinians and Israelis alike enjoy equal measures of democracy, opportunity, and dignity in their lives.

A peace, in short, that is just, comprehensive, and lasting.

I pledge to keep working to support this goal.

And I thank you.