

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE 2022 SESSION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

New York, 8 February 2022

[as delivered]

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory -- including East Jerusalem -- continues to pose a significant challenge to international peace and security.

The promise of the independence of the Palestinian state remains unfulfilled.

Political, economic and security conditions across the Occupied Palestinian Territory are deteriorating as Palestinians experience high levels of dispossession, violence and insecurity.

We urgently need to intensify collective efforts to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

The goal remains two States – Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State – living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States.

There is no plan B.

Excellencies,

I am encouraged by recent engagement between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials.

I urge both sides to expand these contacts to encompass underlying political issues.

Piecemeal approaches to the question of Palestine will only ensure that the underlying issues perpetuating the conflict remain unaddressed.

Unilateral steps and illegal actions that drive the conflict must cease. Incitement to violence will lead nowhere and must also be rejected by all.

I am concerned by unabated violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settler violence and military operations that have led to numerous deaths.

It is essential that the parties solidify the cessation of hostilities and support economic development in Gaza. Concerted efforts are essential to ensure calm, strengthen Palestinian institutions, restore hope and avoid a deadly escalation of violence.

Illegal settlement activity, demolitions, and evictions also continue, including in East Jerusalem, undermining international humanitarian and human rights law – and feeding hopelessness, animosity and diminishing prospects for a negotiated solution.

All settlement activity is illegal. It must stop.

Continued human rights violations against Palestinians significantly impede their ability to live in security and develop their communities and economies.

I also call on all parties to preserve the status quo at the Holy Sites in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Excellencies,

As the international community works towards reviving the political process, we must support efforts to improve the economic and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

I am pleased by vital support for the UN Humanitarian Flash Appeal, ongoing reconstruction efforts in Gaza, and critical COVID-19 response efforts by the UN system on the ground.

I remain concerned about the dire fiscal situation facing the Palestinian Authority, which is undermining its institutional stability and ability to provide services to its people.

At the same time, UNRWA's existential financial crisis is affecting the rights and wellbeing of Palestine refugees across the region.

I call on Member States to increase their financial support to the Palestinian people and their contributions to UNRWA, a vital pillar of regional stability.

Let me also note recent Israeli decisions to increase the movement of goods and people in and out of the Gaza Strip. While a welcome development, it is important to expand such steps and work towards a full lifting of the debilitating closures in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1860.

Excellencies,

Time is running short.

We cannot lose sight of the long-sought goal of ending the occupation and realizing a two-State solution.

All parties must take concrete steps that will enable a return to the path of meaningful negotiations and, ultimately, a just and lasting peace.

The United Nations is committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict.

Let us reinforce our shared commitment to this goal.

Thank you.



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