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**SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN**  
**SCR 2334 (2016)**

**27 September 2023**

Mister President,

Members of the Security Council,

Today's briefing is devoted to the 27<sup>th</sup> report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The reporting period is from 15 June to 19 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.

Israeli authorities advanced plans for 6,300 housing units in Area C, including the retroactive “legalization”, under Israeli law, of three outposts near the settlement of Eli. In East Jerusalem, approximately 3,580 housing units were advanced.

On 11 September a plan for 3,500 housing units was advanced, most of which are located in East Jerusalem on land owned by the Greek Orthodox Church. The Church said the units will be for members of the Christian community.

On 18 June, the Israeli Government removed the requirement for Ministerial approval at interim stages of settlement planning and delegated this authority to the Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defense, likely expediting settlement expansion.

On 2 August, the Israeli Supreme Court dismissed a petition to dismantle an outpost established in the former settlement of Homesh in the occupied West Bank, evacuated under the 2005 Disengagement Law.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities, demolished, seized or forced people to demolish 238 structures, displacing 183 people, including 46 women and 91 children. 32 structures were donor funded.

On 11 July, Israeli Security Forces evicted a Palestinian family living in Jerusalem's Old City since the 1950's, handing the property to a settler organization, following a Supreme Court ruling that the property is owned by a Jewish trust, based on Israeli laws that allow only Jews to reclaim property they owned pre-1948.

On 17 August, a Palestinian elementary school in Ein Samiya serving nearly 80 pupils was demolished days before the start of the school year. Fifty-nine schools, serving some 6,500 Palestinian students, are at risk of demolition.

In a continuing trend, many Palestinians, including children, left from their communities citing violence by settlers and shrinking grazing land. Mister President,

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction.” Unfortunately, daily violence continued.

Over the reporting period, 68 Palestinians, including 18 children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, security operations, attacks or alleged attacks against Israelis, and other incidents.

2,830 Palestinians, including 30 women and 559 children, were injured. Of that number, 271 were injured by live ammunition and 2,119 by tear gas inhalation. In addition, two Palestinians were killed and 73 injured, including three women and 12 children, amid a high level of attacks by Israeli settlers.

10 Israelis, including one woman, two children and three Israeli security forces personnel were killed, and 122 Israelis, including six women and six children, and 33 ISF personnel, were injured by Palestinians in attacks, clashes, stone-throwing and other incidents.

Israeli security forces carried out 1,042 search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank, resulting in 1,504 Palestinians arrested, including 88 children. Israel currently holds 1,264 Palestinians in administrative detention, the highest number in over a decade.

Mister President,

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

Many Palestinian casualties in the occupied West Bank occurred in the context of Israeli operations in Area A, including some during subsequent armed clashes with increasingly sophisticated weaponry. On 15 August, in Aqbat Jaber refugee camp, south of Jericho, two Palestinians, including a 16-year-old boy were killed by Israeli security forces two others were killed on 17 and 22 August, including a 16-year-old boy, in Jenin and nearby az-Zababida village. On 19 September, four Palestinians were killed by ISF in the Jenin refugee camp during intensive armed exchanges.

Settler-related violence continued throughout the reporting period, including on 4 August, when armed Israeli settlers approached Burqa village near Ramallah, leading to stone-throwing confrontations with Palestinians. Settlers killed a 19-year-old Palestinian and injured another; one Israeli was injured by Palestinians throwing stones. Israeli Police arrested two Israelis and placed them under house arrest. In addition, on 27 August, Israeli settlers burned land south of Nablus and threw stones at two Palestinian houses.

Three Israelis, including one woman, were killed by Palestinian gunmen in shooting attacks in the occupied West Bank on 19 August and on 21 August.

In other incidents, on 15 August, armed Palestinians near Jenin attempted and failed to launch an improvised rocket towards an Israeli settlement in the area.

In Gaza, since late August, Palestinians resumed protests near the perimeter fence. Palestinian protestors have thrown stones and explosive devices towards ISF and launched incendiary balloons, and ISF have fired live ammunition and tear gas at protestors, resulting in casualties.

Mister President,

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

In an interview, an Israeli Minister said, “My right and that of my wife and my children, to travel on the roads in Judea and Samaria, is more important than the freedom of movement for Arabs.” A Member of the Israeli Knesset said that any “Palestinian running away from an Israel Defense Forces soldier must be shot,” adding, “A Palestinian who approaches an IDF soldier must [also] be shot.” An Israeli minister visited the Holy Sites on the Jewish commemoration day of Tisha B’av and called on Israelis to “return” to the Sites and “show our governance.”

In a speech, a senior Palestinian Authority (PA) official said that Hitler “fought against the Jews because they were dealing with usury and money” and denied that “Hitler killed the Jews for being Jews.” Officials or official social media posts from Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions glorified perpetrators of attacks against Israeli civilians.

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.” Notwithstanding some positive steps, negative trends continued.

During this period, Israeli authorities reduced the handling fee for fuel that Israel transfers to the PA to increase revenues in the PA.

On 9 July, Israel’s Security Cabinet voted to act to “prevent the collapse of the Palestinian Authority”.

On 30 July, President Mahmoud Abbas chaired a meeting of Secretaries-General of Palestinian factions in Egypt, calling for a follow-up committee to complete dialogue to “end divisions and achieve Palestinian national unity.”

On 10 August, President Abbas issued a Presidential Decree, removing 12 of 16 PA Governors from office, including four from Gaza.

On 14 August, participants at a Hamas-organized meeting called for elections to take place in Gaza under Central Elections Commission (CEC) supervision; the call was welcomed by Hamas.

On 17 September, Erez Crossing was closed for exits due to Jewish holidays and has remained closed due to the violence near the security fence, with some exceptions including the transfer of patients for medical treatment. Over 22,000 work and business permit holders have been denied exit since the closure.

Meanwhile, funding shortages continue to undermine the UN’s ability to provide crucial services to Palestinians. UNRWA urgently needs USD 75 million to maintain food assistance through year-end for 1.2 million Palestinians in Gaza; while the World Food Programme requires USD 32 million to restore social assistance to priority families across the OPT. In addition, the humanitarian appeal for Palestinians throughout the OPT is funded at only 33 per cent.

Mr. President,

In 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.”

On 26 June, the U.S. Department of State confirmed that it had circulated foreign policy guidance to relevant agencies advising that “engaging in bilateral scientific and technological cooperation with Israel in geographic areas which came under the administration of Israel after June 5, 1967, and which remain subject to final status negotiations, is inconsistent with U.S. foreign policy.”

Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon “all parties to continue, *inter alia*, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations.”

On 12 August, Saudi Arabia appointed an Ambassador to the State of Palestine and Consul General in Jerusalem for the first time since 1947.

On 14 August, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Palestinian President Abbas met in Egypt. Their joint statement noted, “the importance of Israel halting all settlement activity, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the eviction of Palestinians from their homes”, while underscoring that a “just and comprehensive solution” to the Palestinian cause is the key to stability in the region.

On 18 September Saudi Arabia, the League of Arab States and the European Union, in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, convened a ministerial meeting to “discuss practical ways to reinvigorate” the Middle East Peace Process.

Mister President, in closing, allow me to share the Secretary-General’s observations on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016).

1. I remain deeply troubled by the unrelenting expansion of Israeli settlements and settlement outposts in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with over 10,000 housing units advanced in this reporting period alone. Settlements further entrench the occupation, fuel violence, impede Palestinian access to their land and resources, and systematically erode the viability of a Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution. I reiterate that 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 and dismantle outposts immediately, in line with its obligations under international law.
2. The demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures, including internationally funded humanitarian projects, entail numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. I call upon the Government of Israel to end this practice, in line with its international obligations, and to allow Palestinian communities to build and address their development needs.
3. I remain gravely concerned by the intensification of violence in the occupied West Bank and Israel – at levels not seen in decades – and the use of increasingly lethal weaponry, including in densely populated areas. Immediate steps are needed to de-escalate tensions.

4. I condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror. Such acts can never be justified and must be condemned by all. Perpetrators must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. I am disturbed by the high levels of settler-related violence, often in the proximity of Israeli Security Forces, with perpetrators rarely held accountable. Israel must act to stop all settler violence. 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.
5. I am appalled that children continue to be victims of violence. Children must never be the target of violence, used, or put in harm's way.
6. Security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable to protect life. I call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law, including with regard to the proportional use of force, and ensure thorough, independent and prompt investigations into all instances of possible excessive use of force, holding those responsible to account.
7. In Gaza, the resurgence of violence near the perimeter fence is a reminder of the fragility of the situation and the risk of escalation. Despite some easing of access restrictions, more needs to be done to alleviate the humanitarian situation and improve the economy and freedom of movement. However, only sustainable political solutions, with the ultimate goal of lifting the debilitating Israeli closures in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), will restore hope to Gaza's long-suffering population.
8. I am disturbed by the multiple instances in which officials have used dangerous or racist rhetoric and engaged in incitement, which must be rejected by all.
9. I welcome President Abbas' convening of Palestinian factions in Egypt and encourage all actors to take concrete steps towards reuniting Gaza and the occupied West Bank under a single, democratic Government. The absence of intra-Palestinian unity continues to undermine Palestinian national aspirations.
10. I remain concerned by the critical state of Palestinian Authority finances that is impacting the Government's ability to deliver services and pay public sector salaries. I note the Israeli Security Cabinet's decision to strengthen the Palestinian Authority and encourage Israel, and relevant stakeholders, to take tangible steps in this regard, while also encouraging the PA to undertake reforms.
11. I also urge Member States to enable UNRWA to deliver on its General Assembly mandate, to ensure delivery of essential services crucial to stability throughout the region. I also encourage additional support to WFP, so it can continue delivering vital assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinian families. I welcome the additional pledges made to UNRWA during the Ministerial meeting on 21 September.
12. There is no substitute for a legitimate political process that will resolve the core issues driving the conflict. I remain committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to end the occupation and resolve the conflict in line with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions, and bilateral agreements in pursuit of the vision of two States – Israel and an

*As delivered*

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 shared capital of both States.

Thank you.