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**Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli  
Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian  
People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories**

## **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories\*\***

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the fiftieth report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/84.

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\* A/73/150.

\*\* The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent developments.

## **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories**

### *Summary*

The present report contains information regarding the Special Committee's efforts to implement its mandate, and on the human rights situation in the occupied Arab territories, over the past year. The report includes information from consultations with Member States in Geneva in March 2018, followed by a mission to Jordan in July 2018. The report addresses a number of concerns related to respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including: the continued expansion of settlements; the practice of demolishing homes and confiscation of property; the coercive environment and risk of forcible transfer; the humanitarian crisis in Gaza resulting from the blockade; apparent excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, particularly in the context of demonstrations along the Gaza fence; lack of accountability for alleged violations of international law throughout the occupied territories; the continued use of administrative detention; the conditions of detention and detention of children in particular; and challenges to the work of human rights defenders. The Special Committee further examines issues relating to the expansion of Israeli settlements, the lack of development opportunities for Syrian villages and the holding of local elections in the occupied Syrian Golan.

## I. Introduction

1. The Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories was established in 1968 by General Assembly resolution 2443 (XXIII). The Special Committee is currently composed of three Member States: Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Senegal. In 2018, the Special Committee was represented by three members, H.E. Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York (Chair of the Special Committee), H.E. Mr. Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in New York, and H.E. Mr. Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations in Geneva.

## II. Mandate

2. The mandate of the Special Committee, as set out in General Assembly resolution 2443 (XXIII) and subsequent resolutions, is to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. The occupied territories are considered as those remaining under Israeli occupation since 1967, namely, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; as well as the Occupied Syrian Golan.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/84, which requested the Special Committee, "...pending complete termination of the Israeli occupation, to continue to investigate Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, especially Israeli violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and to consult, as appropriate, with the International Committee of the Red Cross according to its regulations in order to ensure that the welfare and human rights of the peoples of the occupied territories, including prisoners and detainees, are safeguarded and to report to the Secretary-General as soon as possible and whenever the need arises thereafter." This report covers the period from 15 July 2017 to 31 August 2018.

## III. Activities of the Special Committee

### A. Consultations with Member States in Geneva

4. The Special Committee held its annual consultations in Geneva on 19 and 20 March 2018.<sup>1</sup> During the consultations, the Special Committee held meetings with Member States concerned with the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/84 and attended discussions under Item 7 of the Human Rights Council's 37th Session, entitled "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." The consultations were held with a view to discussing with Member States the most pressing matters to be addressed in the Special Committee's report to the General Assembly, and to gather information on recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

5. The Special Committee met with the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Committee also met with the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. A request to meet with the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office in Geneva received no response.

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<sup>1</sup> H.E. Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera was unable to attend the annual consultations in Geneva, and was represented by H.E. Mr. Sabarullah Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York.

6. During the discussions, representatives of Member States expressed support for the work of the Special Committee, and regretted the fact that Israel does not recognize and cooperate with the Committee, nor allow it access to the occupied territories. The representative of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated the Government's invitation for the Committee to visit Damascus and meet with Syrians who have been forcibly displaced from the Occupied Syrian Golan.

7. The representatives of the Member States met were especially concerned with the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as in the West Bank in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which threatens the very possibility of a viable and contiguous Palestinian state and is in violation of international humanitarian law. They expressed dismay at the increasingly coercive environment in which Palestinians live in East Jerusalem and in Area C of the West Bank, and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan. They were also concerned with the continuation of the blockade by Israel of the Gaza Strip for the eleventh year, and its numerous negative impacts on the most basic human rights of residents, including their rights to health, food, education and freedom of movement.

8. The Special Committee was further briefed on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights' reports to the 37th session of the Human Rights Council. The Special Committee was also briefed on the main findings of the latest reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, which were presented at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council and the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

9. Issues raised during the consultations were taken into consideration when planning and conducting the field mission of the Special Committee, held in July 2018, as well as in the preparation of the present report.

## **B. Field Mission to Investigate Israeli Practices**

10. The Special Committee wrote to the Government of Israel on 25 June 2018 requesting access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories occupied since 1967. As in previous years, Israel did not respond. The Special Committee was thus unable to hold consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities, or to gain access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

11. Due to insecurity in the region, the Special Committee was not able to visit the Syrian Arab Republic or Gaza via the Rafah crossing. Instead, the Special Committee convened meetings with civil society, victims and witnesses, Palestinian officials and United Nations representatives in Amman, Jordan from 17 to 19 July 2018.<sup>2</sup> When witnesses were unable to travel to Amman, especially from the occupied Syrian Golan and from Gaza due to the denial of travel permits, the Special Committee gathered testimony and briefings via teleconference. The Special Committee expresses its sincere appreciation to all those who provided testimony and briefings on a wide range of human rights and humanitarian issues. On 23 July, at the conclusion of its annual mission, the Special Committee released a press statement.<sup>3</sup>

12. Documentation and other materials submitted to the Committee were carefully examined prior to the preparation of this report and were archived by the secretariat. Information contained in this report is primarily based on testimony and submissions received by the Special Committee over the course of its mission in July 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> H.E. Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera was unable to attend the mission to Jordan, and was represented by H.E. Mr. Satya Rodrigo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York; H.E. Mr. Shahrul Ikram Yaakob was also unable to attend the mission to Jordan, and was represented by H.E. Mr. Amran Mohamed Zin, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in Geneva.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/end-of-mission-statement-of-the-un-special-committee-to-investigate-israeli-practices/>

## IV. Situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

13. The Special Committee heard concerns on a wide range of issues during its meetings. Briefings to the Committee emphasized the rise of discriminatory measures against Palestinians in a climate of impunity, with the continuation by Israel of its unlawful policies and practices. Specific areas of concern highlighted throughout the mission included the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, coupled with the destruction and confiscation of property; the coercive environment and the risk of forcible transfer; the exploitation of natural resources, the blockade and closure of Gaza and its negative impact on the basic human rights of its residents; the use of excessive force by Israeli security forces; the lack of accountability; detention of children and continued use of administrative detention; and a hostile environment to human rights organizations that work to document human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

14. The Committee received detailed information regarding worrying developments with respect to the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, as well as legislative and procedural changes that impact the administration of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Those who briefed the Committee raised concerns about the de facto or possible future de jure annexation of parts of the West Bank given these developments.

15. Settlements amount to the transfer of parts of an Occupying Power's civilian population into the territory it occupies, which is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>4</sup> The illegality of settlements under international law has been reiterated in a number of Security Council resolutions, including most recently resolution 2334 (2016).

### *Expansion of Settlements*

16. Israeli settlement expansion and development continued in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during the reporting period. According to information received by the Committee, 6,742 housing units were advanced in Area C in 2017, and at least 3,000 units were advanced in Area C in the first half of 2018. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, tenders were issued for 3,284 units in 2017 and for 3,770 units from January to August 2018. Official data on settlement construction starts in Area C indicates that 1,643 units were constructed in settlements in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

17. The Committee heard that despite the fact that no outposts were legalized under Israeli law in the reporting period, six outposts were illegally established by settlers in the West Bank in 2017 and 2018. Members of the Committee were also informed that the Committee on Legalizing the Issues of Land Ownership for the Jewish Settlements in the West Bank submitted a report in February 2018 that provides a number of recommendations to allow the legalization of thousands of unauthorized Israeli housing units in the West Bank, including those built on privately-owned Palestinian land.

18. Briefings emphasized that settlements are at the center of many human rights violations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Committee heard that many Israeli practices in the West Bank favour settlers, and are designed to force Palestinians to leave, noting that this pressure is particularly high in areas close to Israeli settlements. The Committee has previously noted that Palestinian communities in close proximity to settlements are subject to frequent raids by Israeli forces, sometimes resulting in arrest and detention of residents, including children.<sup>6</sup> A 50% increase in incidents of settler violence against Palestinians was reported in the first four months of 2018, compared to the number of incidents in 2017.<sup>7</sup> These incidents included stone-throwing, vandalism, and physical attacks, and occurred largely in Palestinian communities close to settlements.

### *Destruction and Confiscation of Property*

<sup>4</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, article 49 (6).

<sup>5</sup> <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/construction>

<sup>6</sup> A/72/539 para 22.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/increase-settler-violence-during-first-four-months-2018>

19. Demolition of homes and private property of Palestinians by Israeli security forces was one of the most frequently cited issues of concern in the Committee's meetings this year. According to information received by the Committee, between 1 July 2017 and 15 July 2018 Israeli security forces demolished 213 structures owned by Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. All but five of these demolitions occurred near to a settlement, to the wall, or to a closed military zone. Out of these structures, 194 were demolished due to lack of building permits, and 19 were demolished as punitive measures against family members of Palestinians involved or allegedly involved in attacks against Israelis. A total of 121 of the demolished structures were houses, the demolition of which led to the displacement of 579 people, of whom 290 were children.

20. Of the total structures demolished, 99 of them were located in East Jerusalem, and 53 were houses. Of the demolitions in East Jerusalem, 98 were carried out on the grounds that they lacked proper building permits, while one house was demolished as a punitive measure. As a result of these demolitions, of the total number of people displaced, 239 of them lived in East Jerusalem, and 127 were children, while 5 were individuals with special needs.

21. Demolitions are largely justified by the Israeli authorities on the basis of lack of building permits. However, as the Committee has previously noted, building permits are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. Israel's discriminatory planning and zoning regime in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, significantly restricts the prospects for Palestinian development.<sup>8</sup> A smaller percentage of demolitions are carried out for punitive reasons. In some cases, the homes of individuals related to a person who attacked or allegedly attacked an Israeli would be demolished. This practice, halted for 10 years from 2004, resumed in 2014. The Secretary-General has noted that penalizing individuals from crimes they did not commit raises concerns of collective punishment. Collective punishment is prohibited under international humanitarian law, and violates provisions of international human rights law.<sup>9</sup>

22. Confiscation or destruction of property provided as humanitarian assistance by States – an issue the Committee has previously noted with concern<sup>10</sup> – was once again reported to the Committee. Notably, on 4 February 2018 Israeli authorities demolished two classrooms built with donor funding in the Bedouin refugee community of Abu Nuwar, located on the outskirts of Jerusalem in Area C.<sup>11</sup> The European Union Representative and EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and in Ramallah expressed strong concern about the demolition, as did the UN Humanitarian Coordinator.<sup>12</sup> The Committee has previously reported on the situation in Abu Nuwar and raised concerns about outstanding demolition orders for the community as well as a previous demolition of a donor-funded schoolroom.<sup>13</sup>

23. The Committee recalls that Israel, as the occupying power, is obligated to provide for the humanitarian needs of the protected population, as well as to agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population and to facilitate those relief schemes by all the means at its disposal.<sup>14</sup> The Committee would like to emphasize its deep concern for this community as well as for the more than 7,000 people living in the 46 other Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank who are particularly vulnerable.

#### ***Coercive Environment and Risk of Forcible Transfer***

24. The Special Committee was once again briefed on the situation of communities at risk of forcible transfer as a result of the existence of a coercive environment. Factors contributing to the creation of a coercive environment include: plans of the Israeli government to relocate or evict communities from their lands; demolition of homes and other

<sup>8</sup> A/72/539 para. 31.

<sup>9</sup> A/72/565 para. 18.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. A/72/539 para. 32.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-acting-humanitarian-coordinator-opt-roberto-valent-israeli-authorities-destruction>

<sup>12</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/39422/local-eu-statement-demolition-israeli-authorities-parts-school-bedouin-community-abu-nuwar\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/39422/local-eu-statement-demolition-israeli-authorities-parts-school-bedouin-community-abu-nuwar_en)

<sup>13</sup> A/72/539 para.35.

<sup>14</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49.

structures; pressure applied by government officials; military operations and settler violence; restrictions on freedom of movement and limited access to essential services; restrictions on access to land and natural resources; lack of accountability and lack of access to justice; and strict residency and permit regulations which negatively impact family unification between residents of East Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank.<sup>15</sup> Palestinians in parts of Area C of the West Bank, particularly residents of Bedouin communities and others in the Jerusalem periphery, as well as Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem were noted as being affected by the existence of a coercive environment to the Committee.

25. The Committee was updated on the increasingly concerning situation of Khan-al-Ahmar, a Bedouin community in the Jerusalem periphery. On 24 May 2018, the Israeli High Court upheld demolition orders issued by Israel against all structures within the Khan-al-Ahmar community, including the school. The demolition orders were issued on the basis that the structures in Khan-al-Ahmar were built without Israeli permits. Israeli forces began levelling access routes around the village on 4 July. Residents of Khan al Ahmar have filed a series of petitions with the Israeli High Court challenging the demolition orders, most recently on 5 July 2018. The Court issued a temporary injunction halting the demolition also on 5 July. As of the writing of this report, the demolition orders remained in place as did the temporary injunction, and the future of the community remains uncertain. The state has proposed moving the community to a pre-determined relocation site, which the community has repeatedly rejected for a number of reasons including the proximity of the site to a garbage dump as well as the small size of the site which would prevent the herding community from its traditional lifestyle.

26. United Nations agencies have repeatedly raised concerns about the situation of Khan al Ahmar, noting that demolition of the community's homes and other structures – one element of the coercive environment in which the community lives – could lead to the forcible transfer of that community.<sup>16</sup> Forcible transfer in the context of occupation, undertaken without the free, prior and informed consent of the affected individuals, is prohibited as a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>17</sup>

#### ***Legislative and Administrative Changes***

27. In addition to demolitions and related challenges, new legislation and changes to administrative procedure that have a negative impact on the rights of Palestinians living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were described to the Committee. The picture presented to the Committee, taking these changes together, is one of a situation in which Palestinians' land is ever more easily confiscated, and the avenues for Palestinians to legally challenge such confiscation are increasingly limited. This raises concerns about the viability of a two-state solution, which is the long-stated goal of both parties as well as of the international community.

28. One such change is the Knesset's passage of a law which transfers jurisdiction over administrative cases in the West Bank from the Israeli High Court to the Jerusalem Administrative Affairs Court. This applies to cases brought by Palestinians or by Israeli settlers in the West Bank in specific areas, including cases related to freedom of information, planning and construction, travel permits for entry and exit from the West Bank, and restraining orders on individuals.<sup>18</sup> Concerns were raised to the Committee that the law could limit access to justice for Palestinians in part as a result of higher court fees, in addition to the fact that the Administrative Affairs Court lacks expertise in the applicable legal framework in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including protections afforded by International Humanitarian Law. The law has been described as another step towards de facto annexation of the West Bank, further blurring the distinction between Israel and the West Bank.

<sup>15</sup> A/HRC/34/39 paras. 43-57.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/un-officials-call-end-west-bank-demolitions-and-respect-international-law>

<sup>17</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-knesset-advances-bill-barring-palestinians-from-petitioning-high-court-1.6271237>

29. On 17 April 2018, the Israel Defense Forces commander in the West Bank issued Military Order 1797 which allows for the demolition of “new” structures in the West Bank within 96 hours of the issuance of a removal notice. New structures would be those that the Israeli Civil Administration determines have been built in the past 6 months, or those inhabited for less than 30 days prior to issuance of the removal notice. Demolition orders issued under this new Order can be challenged by showing a valid building permit, or by providing evidence that the structure is not new as defined by the Order.<sup>19</sup> Given the extreme difficulty Palestinians face in obtaining building permits, human rights organizations raised serious concerns about the possible impact of this law. Pursuant to a petition filed in the High Court of Justice by a group of human rights organizations, the Israeli government temporarily froze implementation of the law, which was set to go into effect on 19 June 2018.<sup>20</sup>

## **A. Environment and Access to Natural Resources**

30. The Committee again received substantial information about concerns related to the use of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including lack of access to resources for Palestinians as well as practices which lead to pollution and environmental degradation.

### ***Waste Dumping***

31. A key issue raised in briefings to the Committee regarding the environment is the existence of a number of waste treatment facilities or waste dumps in the Occupied Palestinian Territory which in some cases are located close to Palestinian towns or villages and in which proper precautions to protect the land and nearby residents from pollution and possible hazardous materials are not taken. There are 15 such dumps in the Occupied Palestinian Territory managed by Israel, six of which handle hazardous waste.<sup>21</sup> According to information received by the Committee, a large portion of the material in these facilities is produced in Israel and then transported to the dumps in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Further, according to information received by the Committee, the main treatment facility for medical waste from Israel is also located in the West Bank, in the northern Jordan Valley.

32. Another issue raised in relation to the existence of these facilities in the West Bank is the fact there are few regulations for Israeli facilities operating in the West Bank. For example, the Environmental Protection Law in Israel requires waste disposal plants in Israel to measure and report on a number of elements, including the release of pollutants as well as the process by which waste is received, treated, and disposed of. However, no such regulation exists for facilities operated by Israel in the West Bank, leading to a lack of information about possible risks associated with the existence of the plants, as well as a lack of transparency allowing the plants to operate without disclosing any information about their operations.

33. There are concerns that waste dumps and related pollution have a significant impact on the human rights of Palestinians living in the occupied territory, including the right to health. Israel is obligated, as the Occupying Power, to respect and protect the human rights of Palestinians.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Access to Water***

34. The issue of access to clean water was raised once again to the Committee, with briefings raising concerns that Israel has sought to control and direct the flow of both surface water as well as subterranean water in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to information received by the Committee, the Israeli Civil Administration has been implementing a 2012 plan to build a number of dams across surface waters in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. To-date, seven dams have been built, which will reportedly allow Israel

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/new-legislation-impedes-challenges-demolitions-and-seizures-west-bank>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.saintyves.org/news/temporary-freeze-of-new-military-order-escalating-demolitions-in-areas-c.html>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/201712\\_made\\_in\\_israel\\_eng.pdf](https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/201712_made_in_israel_eng.pdf) p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> A/HRC/34/38 para.5-9.

to control a significant amount of surface water, and to divert an estimated 260,000 to as much as 1 million cubic meters of surface water annually to settlement agricultural areas.

35. The situation in Gaza is of particular concern. Given the ongoing electricity crisis, access to clean water is more and more challenging for residents of Gaza, and at present 97% of available water is unfit to drink, either due to contamination with sewage or salinity.<sup>23</sup> According to information received by the Committee, the electricity crisis has led to increased pollution of the sea as well as groundwater, as the sewage treatment plant cannot operate fully and raw sewage is consistently dumped directly into the sea. Aquifers under Gaza are increasingly polluted as they are over-pumped, and polluted saltwater is pulled in from the sea. The Committee was told that in addition, surface water that runs into Gaza is also being controlled by Israel, which has reportedly set up installations to collect the water before it enters Gaza.

## **B. Human Rights Situation in Gaza**

### *Demonstrations*

36. A series of demonstrations, which began on 30 March 2018 and are still continuing at the time of writing this report, have taken place along the fence between Gaza and Israel, under the banner of “the Great March of Return.” Palestinians have called for the end of the blockade and closure, and for their right to return to lands from which they were displaced during and after 1948. The demonstrations have been largely peaceful, although incidents in which Palestinians in Gaza burned tires, threw stones and Molotov cocktails, as well as flown burning kites over the fence into Israel have occurred.

37. While the Special Committee views the commission of violent acts by some demonstrators as unacceptable, it strongly condemns the excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israeli security forces in the context of these demonstrations. As of the end of August 2018, 130 Palestinians, including 23 children, three paramedics and two journalists had been killed,<sup>24</sup> the majority with live ammunition in the back, head or chest. Many victims were shot as they were running away from the fence, or up to 300 meters from the fence. Over 18,700 others have been injured, including 4,600 by live ammunition.<sup>25</sup> Some of them will consequently suffer lifelong disabilities. One Israeli soldier was also killed by gunfire near the Gaza fence.

38. In cases reviewed by the Special Committee, the threat posed by demonstrators, even those employing violent means such as throwing stones or Molotov cocktails, did not seem to present a threat to life or serious injury that justified the use of deadly force by the well-armed Israeli security forces.

39. The Committee was briefed about the cases of two paramedics who were killed by the Israeli security forces while on duty and who posed no threat to life or serious injury to the Israeli security forces. On 14 May 2018, 36-year-old Moussa Abu-Hassanin, a chief ambulance officer with the Palestinian Civil Defense, was shot in the chest while he was providing medical aid to a wounded Palestinian about 250 meters from the fence near Jabaliah. He was wearing an orange vest identifying him as medical staff. On 1 June 2018, 21-year-old Rozan Al-Najjar, a volunteer paramedic with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society was shot in the chest with live ammunition while providing medical aid to a wounded Palestinian about 100 meters from the fence, east of Khuza’a. She was wearing a white medical coat and insignia identifying her as medical staff and was raising her hands up only minutes before she was shot.

40. Members of the Committee were also informed of the killing of two Palestinian journalists who were covering the demonstrations when they were shot by Israeli security

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-expert-warns-97-of-gaza-drinking-water-contaminated-by-sewage-salt-1.5747876>

<sup>24</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, August 2018, available at: [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor\\_august\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor_august_2018.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, August 2018, available at: [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor\\_august\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor_august_2018.pdf)

forces. According to the information received, both were wearing blue flak jackets marked with the word “Press” and were not posing any threat to the Israeli security forces. On 6 April 2018, 30-year-old photographer Yaser Murtaja was shot in his abdomen when he was covering a protest approximately 150 meters away from the fence near Khan Younis. He died in the hospital on 7 April. On 13 April, 24-year-old journalist Ahmed Abu Hussein Ahmed was also shot in his abdomen while he was covering a protest 200 meters away from the fence near Jabalia refugee camp. In addition to his blue jacket, he was also wearing a white TV marked helmet. He died from his wounds in the hospital on 25 April.

41. At the time of writing this report, 23 children had been killed by Israeli security forces in the context of these demonstrations. On 14 May 2018, a 15-year-old girl was shot in the head more than 100 meters away from the fence after she attempted to cut the barbed wire fence with a cutter, and a 13-year-old boy was shot in the abdomen while he was sitting on a dirt pile watching the demonstrators about 300 meters away from the fence east of al-Bureij camp. On 29 June 2018, an 11-year-old boy was shot in the head while he was hiding behind a shelter approximately 150 meters away from the fence, north of the town of Khuza’a. The members of the Committee strongly condemn the use of lethal force by the Israeli security forces against these children, who seem to pose no threat to life or serious injury to the Israeli security forces that would justify the use of live ammunition.

42. The Special Committee recalls that in the context of policing demonstrations, the Israeli security forces must respect international human rights instruments pertaining to law enforcement, including the principles on the use of force by law enforcement officials. These principles provide that firearms may be used only as a last resort, and if the use of firearms is unavoidable, that firearms may only be used against persons if there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury.<sup>26</sup> Killing or causing deadly injury resulting from the use of force in the absence of imminent threat of death or serious injury may amount to arbitrary deprivation of life.<sup>27</sup> In the context of an occupation, the killings resulting from the unlawful use of force may also constitute wilful killings, which constitute a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as a war crime.<sup>28</sup>

43. The Special Committee also heard with concern that the months of July and August 2018 saw the most severe escalation in clashes between Israel and Hamas since the 2014 escalation of hostilities, with over 600 projectiles fired by Hamas and other militants from Gaza towards Israel and over 400 missiles and shells fired by the Israeli Defense Forces. According to the information received, one Palestinian woman and three children have been killed in the context of Israeli Defense Forces airstrikes in populated areas of Gaza. No Israelis have been killed in the context of this escalation. The Special Committee calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid endangering the lives of civilians, and worsen the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

### ***Blockade and Closure***

44. The Special Committee was extensively briefed on the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in Gaza. They learnt that the blockade and closure of Gaza by the Israeli authorities, now entering its twelfth year, remains the most significant obstacle to sustainable recovery and economic development, and constitutes a form of collective punishment of the population in Gaza. The Committee reiterates that Israel, as the occupying power in control of the entry and exit of people and goods to Gaza, has the responsibility to meet the needs of the protected population under occupation.<sup>29</sup>

45. Representations made to the Committee highlighted the significant negative impact of restrictions on freedom of movement of people and goods to and from Gaza on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to an adequate standard of living, health, education, work and family life.

<sup>26</sup> Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, articles 2 and 3, and Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, principles 5, 9, 13 and 14; see A/HRC/34/38, para. 45-48.

<sup>27</sup> ICCPR, article 6.

<sup>28</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 147; Rome Statute, article 8(2)(a)(i).

<sup>29</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 55 and 56.

46. The Committee heard with concern that Israeli authorities significantly tightened the restrictions on imports to Gaza, including the entry of fuel, and banned the exit of all goods, during several days in July and August 2018, in response to the launching of incendiary kites from Gaza into Israel. With the current electricity crisis, these restrictions on imports, including of emergency fuel to Gaza, has severely threatened the maintenance of life-saving services, such as 250 critical hospitals and health clinics, water and sewage treatment sites and solid waste collection services.

47. According to information received, the nearly two million Palestinian residents of Gaza, over half of whom are children, face daily power cuts of up to 20 hours and have limited access to water supplies and sanitation services. More than 70% of the population in Gaza relies on humanitarian assistance, the bulk of which is food assistance. This situation is compounded by UNRWA's unprecedented funding crisis. UNRWA explained to the members of the Committee that it will have to scale down some of its emergency programmes for the second half of 2018 in order to be able to continue other programmes such as food security support to nearly one million refugees.

48. Of serious concern to the Committee is the lack of access for Palestinians in Gaza to adequate health care because of shortages of medicines and supplies, as well as hospitals and health centres being forced to reduce essential services due to electricity cuts. As of 31 July 2018, 40% of the essential medicines were completely depleted. Patients seeking permits to leave Gaza for treatment outside of Gaza are facing delays and denials of their permit requests. In the first half of 2018, only 59 per cent of overall patients who requested exit permits for needed medical treatment outside of Gaza were granted their permits. In 2017, according to the World Health Organization, 54 patients died following denial or delay of their permits by the Israeli authorities.

49. The situation of access to health care for Gazans further deteriorated after the demonstrations began on 30 March 2018 because of a spike in needs associated with the large numbers of injuries. Briefings to the Committee highlighted that hospital patients in Gaza have been discharged prematurely to allow for new casualties to be treated, thousands of elective surgeries have been postponed, and long-term rehabilitation services have been severely strained by the many patients needing limb amputations and suffering from serious injuries.

50. The Special Committee was informed that Israeli authorities regularly deny or delay exit permits to access health care for Palestinians injured in the demonstrations. According to the World Health Organization, by 27 August 2018, 270 patients injured in the demonstrations had been referred for medical treatment outside Gaza and had applied for exit permits. Only 23 per cent were approved and the remaining were either denied (37 per cent) or are pending (40 per cent).<sup>30</sup> The denial of permits has had a severe impact on the life and health of injured demonstrators. Members of the Special Committee were briefed on the case of two youths aged 17 and 20, who were injured with live ammunition on 30 March 2018, and referred to a hospital in Ramallah on 1 April 2018 because of the immediate danger of losing their legs. Their exit permits were denied resulting in each having to undergo a leg amputation. They also heard the case of a 14-year-old boy who was injured with live ammunition in his chest on 30 May 2018 and was referred for a medical appointment in East Jerusalem. His permit request was denied on the day of his appointment on 4 June 2018 and he was pronounced dead on 18 June 2018. Denial of medical treatment is a violation of Israel's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

51. Presentations made to the Committee highlighted that the severe restrictions on the movement of goods undermines the economy and the ability to rebuild and repair homes and infrastructure. Gaza's economy experienced -6% growth in the first quarter of 2018 and a similar decrease in the second quarter.<sup>31</sup> Restrictions on the movement of goods also have a negative impact on employment. According to the Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, unemployment was at the highest level ever recorded during the

<sup>30</sup> WHO Situation Report, available at: [healthclusteropt.org/admin/file\\_manager/uploads/files/shares/Documents/5b8cccc1b1383.pdf](http://healthclusteropt.org/admin/file_manager/uploads/files/shares/Documents/5b8cccc1b1383.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/413851537281565349/Economic-Monitoring-Report-to-the-Ad-Hoc-Liaison-Committee>

second quarter of 2018, standing at 53.7 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Unemployment trends are driven largely by the obstruction of construction and other materials entering Gaza.

### C. Accountability

52. Members of the Special Committee express concern at the prevalence of a culture of impunity, in particular in cases that pertain to apparent excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in both the West Bank and Gaza. They reiterate that the atmosphere of impunity fuels the cycle of violence and compromises chances for sustainable peace and security.

53. The Committee was extensively briefed on three cases of alleged excessive use of force by the Israeli security forces in the West Bank for which no or limited investigation and prosecution were conducted, further undermining confidence in the Israeli justice system.

54. The members of the Special Committee met with the family of Mahmoud Badran, a 15-year-old Palestinian who was killed by an Israeli soldier on 21 June 2016 while he was in a car heading home with six cousins and a driver. An Israeli soldier from the Kfir Brigade opened fire on the car as they drove through an underpass beneath Route 443 in the West Bank. Following an initial probe, the Israeli Defense Forces did acknowledge that “uninvolved bystanders were mistakenly hit during a pursuit” and announced the opening of an investigation.

55. According to the information received by the Committee, Israeli investigators interviewed Mahmoud Badran’s family. However, his parents have never been informed of any outcome of the investigation and they are still awaiting information more than two years after the killing. The family only learnt through the media that the Israeli soldier would not stand trial and that he was merely dismissed from the army for failure in conduct during the incident.

56. Members of the Special Committee are deeply concerned at the failure by the Israeli Defense Forces to prosecute a soldier who opened fire on children who did not represent a threat to life or serious injury. They also ask the Israeli Defense Forces to keep Mahmoud Badran’s family informed of the outcome of the investigation.

57. The Committee was also informed of the case of 17-year-old Nadeem Nuwara, who was killed during a demonstration in Beitunia on 15 May 2014 by an Israeli Border Police officer. Video evidence showed that Nadeem Nuwara was not posing any threat when he was shot dead. Three years later, on 25 April 2018, the officer was sentenced by the Jerusalem District Court to nine months of prison on the basis of a plea bargain on the charge of causing death by negligence. The sentence was appealed by the General Prosecutor. On 19 August 2018, the Israeli Court of Justice upheld the state appeal increasing the sentence from nine to 18 months.

58. The Committee was updated on the case of Abdelfattah al-Sharif, a Palestinian who, while already incapacitated after having allegedly stabbed an Israeli soldier, was shot in the head by another Israeli soldier in February 2016. The soldier was initially sentenced to 18 months in prison, a sentence which was reduced by the Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff to 14 months in September 2017.<sup>33</sup> The soldier has since been released as of 8 May 2018, after having served two thirds of the reduced sentence.

59. According to the information received, these two convictions remain exceptional and the sentences are considered excessively lenient compared to the gravity of the violations committed by these Israeli security officers.

60. With regard to the situation in Gaza, Israeli and Palestinian organisations – citing the high number of deaths and injuries among demonstrators - filed two petitions with the Israeli High Court of Justice demanding the assessment of the Israeli Defense Forces open-fire regulations. According to information received, on 24 May 2018, the Court issued its

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor\\_august\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hummonitor_august_2018.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> A/72/593, para. 65.

decision in which it declared that the Israeli Defense Forces' actions during the demonstrations in Gaza were legal under international law and domestic Israeli law and deferred the assessment of the open-fire policy to the Israeli Defense Forces' internal investigation mechanism.<sup>34</sup> Organizations briefing the Committee expressed concern about the permissiveness of the judicial scrutiny of the conduct of the Israeli security forces.

61. The Committee was informed that the Israeli Military Advocate General decided in August 2018 to open an internal investigation into two cases related to the killing of demonstrators along the fence in Gaza. The first case is related to a 19-year-old demonstrator killed in Abu Safia on 30 March 2018 and the second case is related to a 14-year-old boy, who was killed east of Malaka area on 13 July 2018. Both victims were shot dead with live ammunition. Their shootings were captured in videos widely shared on social media.

62. Organisations briefing the Committee explained that it is essential to have a system in which cases can be brought to the Office of the Military Advocate General, however they expressed concern at the lack of independence, impartiality and transparency of that Office. They highlighted that the confidence in the Israeli military justice system is undermined by the fact that investigations, when they take place, rarely result in prosecutions, and sentences frequently do not match the gravity of the violations committed by the Israeli security forces.

63. In this context, the Special Committee welcomes the decision of the Human Rights Council in May 2018 to create an independent commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international law in the context of the military assaults on the demonstrations that began on 30 March 2018,<sup>35</sup> as an important means of seeking effective justice and redress for victims.

## D. Detention

64. The Special Committee was briefed extensively on the situation of Palestinian detainees in Israeli custody. A wide range of serious concerns were raised, including: the continued use of administrative detention, arrest and detention of children and lack of access to proper medical care. Palestinian officials and civil society organizations drew attention to Israel's detention of thousands of Palestinians, including children, and raised concern about the number of Palestinian detainees held in 22 prisons, military camps and detention centers inside Israel, in violation of international humanitarian law. The Committee was informed that, as of July 2018, there were at least 5,820 Palestinian detainees held by Israel.<sup>36</sup>

### *Administrative Detention*

65. The members noted with deep regret that in submissions received by the Special Committee, concerns were expressed over continuous ad hoc and arbitrary administrative detention, often on the basis of secret information to which the detainee is neither given access nor the opportunity to challenge. Administrative detainees are held without trial or charge on indefinitely renewable 6-month administrative detention orders. Israeli authorities continue to issue administrative detention orders for human rights defenders, activists, political leaders, journalists, university students, lawyers, mothers of detainees, and businesspeople.

66. It was reported that, as of July 2018, around 446 Palestinians, including seven Members of Parliament and two children, were held by Israel under administrative detention orders.<sup>37</sup> The Committee was informed that the longest period of administrative detention for any individual was seven consecutive years. In some cases, people are administratively detained frequently for as many as 10 or 15 years, with only occasional short breaks of a few months in between the issuance of administrative detention orders.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/hcj-petition-revoke-rules-engagement-permitting-live-fire-non-dangerous-demonstrators-near-gaza-fence/>.

<sup>35</sup> A/HRC/RES/S-28/1

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.addameer.org/statistics/20180730>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.addameer.org/statistics/20180730>

67. Information was received that many detainees have attempted to take collective action to call for an end to the use of administrative detention. Palestinian administrative detainees reportedly launched an open-ended boycott, refusing to attend military court hearings, which has been ongoing since 15 February 2018. Moreover, the Committee was informed that three prisoners are currently on a hunger strike and was briefed about the high possibility of future hunger strikes against administrative detention. The Committee recalls the widespread hunger strike among Palestinian detainees that began in April 2017 and lasted for 40 days, about which it was briefed extensively during its 2017 mission.<sup>38</sup> The Committee notes that many of the concerns raised by detainees at that time, including conditions of detention, family visits, and the use of administrative detention, continue today.

68. The Committee once again draws attention to relevant international legal standards in both international human rights law and international humanitarian law. According to Article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, such measures should be used only in exceptional circumstances, for imperative reasons of security. In addition, the lack of charge or trial, and the practice of holding detainees on secret evidence, is not in compliance with key international human rights safeguards.<sup>39</sup>

### *Detention of Children*

69. The members noted with deep regret reports that arrests of children are on the rise, and that children continue to suffer from ill-treatment during arrest and detention. Over the preceding three years, the number of children in detention has effectively doubled, with a spike in 2015. In December 2014, there were 156 child detainees, a number which rose to 470 at the end of 2015, and as of December 2017, the figure stood at 350. As of July 2018, there were 270 children in detention,<sup>40</sup> reportedly as young as 10 years old. Since 2000, at least 8,000 Palestinian children have reportedly been arrested and prosecuted in the Israeli military justice system. Moreover, in the context of recent demonstrations, 100 Palestinian children have been detained without trial. Roughly half of child detainees are held outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in violation of international humanitarian law.

70. The Committee was informed that 75 percent of arrested children reported having been exposed to physical or psychological ill-treatment. Arrests often occur during the night, with security forces entering the home and waking up the family in order to arrest the children. This practice has been condemned by human rights groups given the fear and anxiety it causes both to the children as well as to the families. Families in many cases are not told why children are being arrested. During transport to the detention facility, children report being subject to violence and humiliation. In a large number of cases, children are reportedly interrogated without a parent or guardian present, and there are serious concerns about the possibility of forced confessions. The Committee noted with great concern reports about the practice of plea-bargaining, in which detained children plead guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence. There are concerns that this practice pressures children to plead guilty in cases where they may actually be innocent, particularly when they are interrogated without the presence of a parent or guardian.

71. The Committee noted the case of Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi, whose detention for slapping two Israeli soldiers standing in front of her home sparked international condemnation. In particular, concerns were raised about the Israeli government's decision to hold Ms. Tamimi in pre-trial detention. International standards require that children should not be deprived of their liberty unless they pose an imminent threat to themselves or to others, and all other means have been exhausted. In all cases, they may be detained only for as long as strictly necessary. Ms. Tamimi was sentenced to eight months in prison after agreeing to a plea bargain, and released on 29 July 2018.

72. The Committee was briefed that after sentencing, nearly 50% of Palestinian child detainees are transferred from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to prisons inside Israel, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The practical consequence of this is that many children receive either very few or no family visits, as it is difficult for Palestinians to obtain

<sup>38</sup> See A/72/539 paras 49-50.

<sup>39</sup> ICCPR, art. 9.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.addameer.org/statistics/20180730>

the necessary permits to enter Israel. In addition, the distance and cost of travel to Israel is prohibitive for many families.

73. Concerns were raised to the Committee about the fact that Israeli children fall under the civil legal system, whereas Palestinian children are under the jurisdiction of military courts in the West Bank. The establishment of separate juvenile courts has reportedly not resulted in any improvement in the situation of Palestinian children arrested by the Israeli authorities, as these courts reportedly remain part of the military justice system.

74. Several organizations informed the Committee that they had made efforts to provide support to children in custody. However, they expressed concern that they face difficulties in liaising with the Israeli authorities and obtaining information about children in detention who may be in need of assistance. According to these briefings, the Israeli authorities argue that they wish to protect the privacy of the detained children and thus do not share information.

#### ***Healthcare in Detention***

75. Palestinian government representatives stressed that access to healthcare is essential. The Committee heard testimony that the medical needs of Palestinian detainees within the Israeli prison system continue to be neglected, in several cases leading to deaths which might have been avoided with proper care and timely diagnosis. According to the information received by the Committee, in 2018 so far, two detainees have died as a result of medical neglect.

76. The Committee was told about the difficulties faced by detainees with chronic diseases. Several organizations and government representatives also raised concerns about a lack of regular check-ups and screenings, noting that these types of measures could assist in early identification of illnesses. Concerns about delays in treatment were also raised, with some detainees reportedly waiting for years to receive needed surgery. Concerns were raised with the Committee about cases in which detainees have been subject to physical violence, even when they are known to be ill. On 21 May 2018, a man from Jerusalem with a known heart condition was reportedly physically abused, which resulted in a massive heart attack. In another case, an 18-year-old with kidney issues and a blood disease was detained but not provided with the proper treatment, despite the fact that his health issues were documented and known by the detention authorities. He suffered complications due to lack of needed treatment and reportedly lost his eyesight.

77. The Special Committee was told about the particularly worrying situation of detainees in need of psychological care. In many cases, these detainees are not detained separately from others although it would be important for their safety and well-being to do so, and they are not provided with the healthcare they need.

### **E. Shrinking Democratic Space**

78. The Committee heard about the difficulties faced by human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organizations working on issues related to the occupation. Concerns raised in 2017 were once again highlighted, including reports of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders by the Israeli authorities, including recurrent arrest and interrogation for social media postings and participation in peaceful demonstrations.

79. The Committee was briefed on the case of Aref Jaber, a Palestinian journalist and human rights defender, who was intimidated and physically assaulted by the Israeli security forces on 2 June 2018 at his house in Hebron, following his filming of the aftermath of the killing of a 37-year-old Palestinian worker by Israeli soldiers in the Jaber neighbourhood of Hebron.

80. One issue raised in briefings to the Committee is a newly proposed piece of legislation which would prohibit the filming of Israeli soldiers while on duty. The bill was proposed in June 2017 and at the time of writing had not yet passed, but had been approved by the ministerial committee. The bill would reportedly criminalize filming or publishing footage of Israeli soldiers “with intent to harm the morale of Israel’s soldiers or its

inhabitants.” The bill was proposed in the wake of the case of the killing of Abdelfattah al-Sharif,<sup>41</sup> in which an Israeli soldier was filmed shooting him while he was already incapacitated and lying on the ground. The case garnered international attention after the video was widely shared online. The bill reportedly names human rights organizations such as the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem which published the video of the shooting in the case mentioned above. The bill alleges that B’Tselem and others’ efforts to share documentation of human rights violations is part of an effort to harm national security.

## V. Situation of Human Rights in the occupied Syrian Golan

81. Syrian officials and civil society organizations presenting information on issues related to the occupied Syrian Golan raised a number of serious concerns, including the expansion of Israeli settlements; Israel’s discriminatory policies towards the Syrian population; the lack of development opportunities for Syrian villages; and the holding of local elections in four Syrian villages.

82. The Committee was briefed about the expansion of settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, in violation of international law. During the reporting period, the number of Israeli settlers has grown due to a number of financial incentives offered by the Israeli authorities to settlers, as well as the development of residential and industrial areas. On 3 September 2017, Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz announced Israel’s intention to send another 100,000 settlers to the area.<sup>42</sup> Organizations have expressed concern at Israel’s plan to change the demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan.

83. According to information received by the Committee, there are currently almost as many Israelis as Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan, yet the Syrian population is restricted to a very small portion of the land. As of April 2018, 26,261 Israelis settlers lived in 34 Israeli settlements across the Occupied Syrian Golan and control – together with the army - 95% of the land, whereas 26,600 Syrians lived in five villages.<sup>43</sup>

84. The expansion and development of the five Syrian villages to accommodate their growing populations remains administratively constrained by Israeli planning and zoning policies. The Committee heard that it is nearly impossible for Syrians to obtain building permits, resulting in overcrowded villages with strained infrastructure. Many Syrians have no other option than to build homes and other structures without the required permits, often resulting in high fines and prison sentences in the case of non-payment.<sup>44</sup> The first home demolition in the occupied Syrian Golan in nearly 30 years was carried out in 2016, and raised concerns that this practice, widespread in the occupied West Bank, could continue in the occupied Syrian Golan as well.<sup>45</sup>

85. Unequal access to resources such as land and water continues to disadvantage Syrian workers. The Committee heard that the Israeli authorities have diverted water for Israel’s development in the occupied Syrian Golan, leaving Syrians unable to compete with Israeli settlers in agriculture and tourism. Today, agriculture is no longer profitable for Syrians as the cost of water is too high and their access to land is limited. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, Israeli authorities restrict Syrian usage of land for farming to 45,000 acres of land, while Israeli settlers are allowed to utilize 350,000 acres of land. In addition, Israeli settlers enjoy preferential access to water, with an average of three times the water allocation of Syrian farmers.<sup>46</sup> Tourism activities by Syrians also remain limited because of their difficulty in obtaining building permits and accessing credit. As a result, Syrians, especially the young generation, have no other choice but to look for a job outside of the occupied Syrian Golan, prompting them to request Israeli passports in order to be able to travel and exit the territory.

<sup>41</sup> See above para. 60.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/227936>

<sup>43</sup> Al-Marsad, *Forgotten Occupation*, 4 April 2018, p.18.

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS\\_629263/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_629263/lang--en/index.htm), para. 147.

<sup>45</sup> A/72/539 para 75.

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS\\_629263/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_629263/lang--en/index.htm), para. 149.

These developments further increase pressure on Syrian citizens to abandon their Syrian identity, resulting in the intensification and entrenchment of the occupation.<sup>47</sup>

86. Members of the Special Committee were informed that local elections will be held on 30 October 2018 in four Syrian villages<sup>48</sup> of the occupied Syrian Golan for the first time since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. Organizations have expressed concern that these elections are a manifestation of Israel's desire to impose its sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of international law. Under Israeli law, eligible candidates for local elections must hold Israeli citizenship. According to information received by the Committee, only 12% of the inhabitants of these four Syrian villages hold Israeli citizenship.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the majority of the Syrian population will not be able to stand as candidates, raising concern that the Syrian population will lack adequate representation in the local government. With their residency status, the majority of the Syrians will only be able to vote, but not themselves be elected. These elections heighten pressure on Syrian citizens to become legally integrated into Israel by obtaining Israeli citizenship. The Committee was informed that naturalization is encouraged by the Israeli authorities.

87. The Committee recalls Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which determined that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and that the Fourth Geneva Convention continued to apply in the occupied Syrian Golan.

## VI. Recommendations

88. **The Special Committee calls upon the Government of Israel:**

(a) **To implement all prior recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Committee to the General Assembly, and to facilitate access by the Special Committee to enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan;**

(b) **To end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, as well as its occupation of the Syrian Golan, in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981);**

(c) **To cease all settlement activity, in compliance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and construction of the separation wall in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which contravenes international law and undermines the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people;**

(d) **To immediately freeze and end the illegal practice of demolitions, including administrative and punitive demolitions – which further constitute illegal collective punishment – and which contribute to the creation of a coercive environment and may lead to the forcible transfer of vulnerable communities, in violation of international humanitarian law and the rights of the Palestinian people;**

(e) **To ensure Palestinians have access to a non-discriminatory planning and zoning process which will advance the interests of the protected population in Area C, including Palestine refugees;**

(f) **To rescind all demolition, eviction and seizure orders that are likely to lead to the forcible transfer of Bedouin communities in the occupied West Bank, which affects their pastoralist lifestyle, leading to the breakdown of their traditional economies and damaging their distinct social fabric;**

(g) **To ensure that Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are not subject to discriminatory requirements, that their rights to family life is fully respected and**

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS\\_629263/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/107/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_629263/lang--en/index.htm), para. 151.

<sup>48</sup> The four Syrian villages are Buq'ata, Mas'adah, Majdal Shams and Ayn Quniyah.

<sup>49</sup> Percentage of inhabitants who hold Israeli citizenship per village: Buq'ata: 12.6%; Majdal Shams: 11.6%; Mas'adah: 13.1%; Ayn Quniyah: 10.2%

protected, and to immediately end the illegal practice of punitive residency revocation for residents of East Jerusalem;

(h) To take all measures to end illegal practices of collective punishment, including punitive home demolitions, revocation of insurance benefits, residency revocation, arrest and detention, and any other measures which seek to penalize the family members of attackers or alleged attackers, which are inhumane and have no deterrent effect;

(i) To lift the illegal land and sea blockade that has been imposed on Gaza for more than eleven years and open up opportunities for trade and increasing movement of Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank;

(j) To immediately address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza which has been made acute by the electricity shortage, and to uphold its obligations as occupying power with respect to the protected Palestinian population;

(k) To facilitate access to medical treatment for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with particular attention to the urgency of the need in Gaza due to the deteriorating conditions caused by the blockade and closure as well as the electricity crisis;

(l) To take all necessary precautions to ensure that Israeli forces act in accordance with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;

(m) To systematically investigate all cases of excessive use of force that have led to death or serious injury, including in the context of the "Great March of Return" demonstrations, and to ensure those responsible be held accountable;

(n) To conduct a prompt, thorough, transparent and independent investigation into all cases of alleged extrajudicial executions and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice;

(o) To release the bodies of the Palestinians that have not yet been returned to their relatives as soon as possible in order to bring dignified closure in accordance with their religious beliefs and traditions;

(p) To ensure that detainees are treated in accordance with provisions in international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular with respect to detention of children, and to end the practice of administrative detention;

(q) To ensure the protection necessary for the Palestinian civilian population and human rights defenders engaged in the promotion of human rights issues affecting the Occupied Palestinian Territory and allow them to carry out their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment;

(r) To combat the environmental degradation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and to halt exploitation of natural resources, as well as the lack of access for Palestinians and Syrians to important natural resources, notably water resources in the West Bank, the Gaza strip and the occupied Syrian Golan;

(s) To cease all settlement and other illegal activities in the occupied Syrian Golan, and ensure access to a non-discriminatory planning and zoning process which will advance the interests of the protected population.

89. The Special Committee also calls upon the international community:

(a) To call upon Israel to end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, as well as the occupied Syrian Golan in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981);

(b) To use its influence to end the blockade of Gaza, which has a significant detrimental effect on Palestinians, and in particular to immediately address the acute humanitarian crisis;

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(c) To use its influence to cease all settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which contravenes international law and have a detrimental effect on the protected population;

(d) To address Israel's pattern of non-cooperation with the United Nations, in particular regarding the implementation of resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and mechanisms established by the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies;

(e) To give effect to its legal obligations, as contained in the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, on the wall;

(f) To review national policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures in relation to business activity to ensure that they effectively serve to prevent and address the heightened risk of human rights abuses in occupied territories;

(g) To ensure that corporations respect human rights and cease to fund or enter into commercial transactions with organizations and bodies involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

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