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**STATEMENT BY MICHAEL LYNK
SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORY OCCUPIED SINCE 1967**

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Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Guests

Thank you for the opportunity to present my 2021 annual report as Special Rapporteur for this mandate to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. It is truly an honour to serve the international community through this important human rights responsibility.

Before I present to you the leading features from my new report, I must state to you my deep dismay on learning, this past Friday that the Israeli Minister of Defense had designated six Palestinian human rights and civil society groups as terrorist organizations. This is a significant body blow to the Palestinian human rights movement, and to human rights everywhere. It signals that this 54-year-old occupation – already repressive, already acquisitive – is becoming even more abusive of international human rights and humanitarian standards.

I would like to name these six organizations: Addameer, Al-Haq, the Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International – Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees and the Union of Palestinian Women Committees.

These six organizations are widely respected for their stellar work in documenting the human rights violations associated with the Israeli occupation, and for providing voice for those vulnerable Palestinians who have none. They are exemplars of what the international human rights movement stands for.

I urge the distinguished delegates here today to use all of your available diplomatic and political tools to make it known to Israel that this unwarranted decision must be reversed. Counter-terrorism and security legislation has its proper place, but it must never be used to silence the legitimate work of human rights defenders, particularly in the circumstances of a repressive occupation. I ask you to defend the defenders.

Excellencies

My current report before you focuses on the responsibility of the international community to end this endless occupation.

We must remember that the United Nations has long accepted that it bears a permanent responsibility for supervising the Question of Palestine until a just and durable resolution is reached. The global importance of the Question of Palestine

cannot be underestimated. As Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, recalled in his memoirs: "...the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not simply one unresolved problem among many. No other issue carries such a powerful symbolic and emotional charge affecting people far from the zone of conflict."

Yet, the international community has been perplexingly unwilling to meaningfully challenge, let alone acting decisively to reverse, the momentous changes that Israel has been generating on the ground. This has been a political failure of the first order.

Excellencies

Recent trends on the ground are getting worse, not better. The Israeli settlement population is approaching 700,000 settlers. The network of roads and utilities connecting the settlements to Israel and each other is expanding. Settler attacks against Palestinians are sustaining a coercive environment. Gaza remains under a tight blockade, which deepens its impoverishment and distress. And the amount of violence required by Israel to maintain the occupation contains to rise.

The cost of this failure by the international community to employ its own rights-based framework and to enforce its many resolutions has been the evaporation of what lingering possibilities remain for a genuine two-state solution. In its place has emerged what the European Union has acknowledged to be a one state reality of unequal rights, and what regional and international human rights groups have declared to be apartheid. Former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated in June 2021 that: "Israel has pursued a policy of incremental de facto annexation in the territories it has occupied since 1967, to the point where the prospect of a two-state solution has all but vanished."

Yesterday's diplomatic playbook – relying on the realpolitik of Israel's 'facts on the ground', Palestinian weakness and the absence of international law – has only led to repeated peace-process cul-de-sacs, while enabling the patterns of human rights abuses and an endless occupation to continue largely unimpeded. Ignoring the established international framework on occupation and human rights only accelerates this downward trajectory. More of the same is not working, and won't work.

Excellencies

Ending the longest occupation in the modern world, enabling Palestinian self-determination and providing peace, security and a prosperous and shared future for both Israelis and Palestinians requires the international community to adopt the following five principles to achieving the international community's goals of peace, security and justice:

1. The framework for fully ending the occupation must employ a rights-based approach, anchored in international law and human rights;
2. Because of the vast asymmetry in power between Israel and the Palestinians, active international intervention is indispensable;
3. The end goal must be the realization of Palestinian self-determination;
4. Israel has been a bad-faith occupier; and
5. The occupation must end with all deliberate speed.

In the final speech of his life, in April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. called upon his country to "Be true to what you said on paper." My call to the international community is exactly the same. You have already created a rich and workable framework of rights through the hundreds of resolutions that the United Nations has adopted respecting the Israeli occupation. What is required is the political will to enforce them. Because we cannot continue to tolerate the intolerable: the imposition of a colonial reality in Palestine in the 21st century.

We need a rights-based approach. But we also need imaginative and brave diplomacy that is willing to ask the honest questions as to how this five-decade-old occupation has turned into a de facto annexation, and worse. All of this, together with the international application of accountability, could finally enable Palestinians and Israelis to enjoy the prosperity of a shared future together, based on reconciliation, rights and freedoms.

Thank you for your attention.