



End-of-Mission Statement of the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices

Amman, 25 June 2024

The United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (the “Special Committee”) conducted its annual mission to Geneva, Switzerland and Amman, Jordan, from 19 to 24 June 2024.

During the six-day mission, the Special Committee* met with high-level Government officials, UN organisations, Special Procedure mandate holders, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, Commissioners, representatives of civil society organisations, youth representatives, human rights defenders, and Palestinian families.

Furthermore, the Special Committee met with UNRWA officials, and visited Baqa’a refugee camp and interacted with Palestinian refugees. The Special Committee thanks all the persons who took time to provide the Committee with information, and shared their views, perspectives, and experience with the Committee.

The Committee regrets that Israel did not respond to its request for consultations with Israeli authorities nor provided access to Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel’s persistent refusal to hold credible dialogue with the UN Committee further illustrates its unwillingness to be held accountable for its actions and for the policies pursued by Israeli in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel’s refusal to interact with UN mechanisms is unhelpful.

The Special Committee’s visit took place in the context of Israel’s military operations resulting in extensive destruction of the Gaza strip and its campaign against the Palestinian people living there. The visit was also conducted during a time when an ongoing deadly campaign against Palestinians is being waged by Israel security forces and settlers in the West Bank, with over 500 Palestinians being killed since 7 October 2023, with one out of five being children. To date there have been 37,431 people killed in Gaza, with over 85,653 injured due to the sustained attack on the people, damage to civil infrastructure, hospitals, educational facilities, religious sites

of worship and serious disruption of all aspects of cultural and social life. The Special Committee condemns the horrific war crimes that took place on October the 7th and equally condemns the reaction by the Israeli State in its response to these most heinous of crimes. The violent assault on Gaza has been indiscriminate, disproportionate, and callous in nature, cutting off the most needed resources, including food, water, electricity, fuel, medical supplies, and reproductive healthcare products in order to subjugate, dehumanize and collectively punish the Palestinian civilian population. These acts flagrantly violate Israel's obligations under international law as the occupying power to ensure an adequate supply of crucial goods and resources and other fundamental obligations under international human rights law, resulting in the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

The Special Committee was briefed by stakeholders as to the numbers of Palestinians currently being held, including a large number in prisons and detention centres with no access to family, nor the International Committee of the Red Cross nor to the protections of the procedures established by international law. These include thousands of Palestinians detained from Gaza, many of whom are held incommunicado for months and often in stress positions. The Committee was informed that thousands of Palestinian "security" prisoners were being held in unhygienic, overcrowded conditions, with no access to basic human necessities. The Committee was informed that given the steep rise in cases of abuse filed against Israeli security officers, it could be determined that a systematic scheme of inhumane treatment was being executed as a matter of State policy to deprive Palestinians of their liberty.

Throughout its visit, the Special Committee was briefed on the continued and increased systematic targeting of women and children by Israeli security forces, with those killed comprising a high proportion of children. Multiple stakeholders reported a stark increase in sexual harassment, sexual abuse, the threat of rape, and rape itself, including with foreign objects, against men, women, and even children, as well as intimidation through the use of dogs by Israeli security forces. The Committee is shocked by these horrific violations and the levels of impunity for Israeli soldiers that engaged in dehumanizing behaviour, with security personnel publicly and shamelessly sharing photos on social media platforms that violate the privacy and intimate sphere of Palestinian women, aimed to mock, shame, and humiliate them.

The Committee also heard about the systematic use of criminal force against Palestinian women, including their reproductive rights and capacity. They noted accounts of a campaign by Israeli forces to systematically and comprehensively destroy the health care system in Gaza, and consequently prevent births of Palestinians by denying medical and reproductive healthcare, forcing women to give birth in dire conditions. This comes partly as a direct result of Israel's sustained bombing of healthcare facilities, and

killings of medical personnel. The Committee was alarmed to hear that the rate of miscarriage has drastically increased.

The Israeli government has also stepped up its campaign of food deprivation (starvation campaign) in an effort to punish a people who were already food insecure. This policy has included a complete siege of the Gaza Strip since 9 October, using food as a weapon of war, targeting individuals looking for humanitarian assistance, destroying food production and circulation systems, not enabling an environment for effective humanitarian aid delivery and fundamentally damaging the conditions of life. Israeli policies and practices have led to children dying of dehydration and starvation which, as the Committee was told by the actors it met with, the first indicator that a deliberate plan to purposely created famine was being pursued. The targeting of humanitarian aid workers delivering food must not be understated. These practices, like those of targeting journalists, are intentional and aim to block the work of essential workers needed in Gaza. The international community must not wait for this situation to be declared an official famine. Instead it must use all diplomatic and political means to pressure Israel to open the land border crossings and allow and enable essential aid to reach the people who desperately need it.

The Special Committee dedicated a significant segment of its visit to UNRWA's Baqa'a Camp for Gazan refugees. During the visit, the Special Committee met with UNRWA staff, educational and medical personnel, refugees, children and Gazan families. The Special Committee would like to thank UNRWA and the individuals it met with during this visit, particularly for their heroic fortitude in such unimaginable, painful circumstances. The Committee is appalled by the ongoing smear campaign that is currently being directed against UNRWA, and the suspension of financial contributions. To date 193 UNRWA staff have been killed in the current conflict, with family members and loved ones also perishing in the continuous bombing of Gaza. UNRWA provides some of the most essential services, and is the only organisation equipped with providing the much-needed humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Moreover, protection is integral to UNRWA's mandate, where protection for Palestine refugees is understood as the realisation of their rights under international law. The Special Committee notes that the international community must stand in solidarity with UNRWA, including through political and financial support, and should increase funding through the UN regular budget.

The Special Committee had the privilege of meeting with students who are member of UNRWA School Parliament, including children from Gaza, who spoke eloquently about the lack of accountability and the impact Israel's war in Gaza was having on people's trust in human rights, multilateralism, and the rules-based system. They noted the perceived double standards that States were implementing when it came to holding Israel accountable and

seeking justice. Many of the children also had family members and friends who were killed; all had been affected. The children asked, 'Why is this happening to us, and why no one is doing anything?' 'We want action from the world, not empty words,' and noted that, 'if this was happening in other countries this wouldn't be allowed to continue.'

The Special Committee is extremely concerned about the impact the war in Gaza is having on future generations, including their physical and mental health. The conflict will leave a legacy of transgenerational trauma, for which no current psychosocial support exists in Gaza, due to the targeting of healthcare workers and facilities. The Special Committee was also made aware of the psychological impact that carrying out military orders was having upon young Israeli soldiers, who will have to live with the consequences of their actions far beyond the current conflict.

The Special Committee would like to thank the families from Gaza who briefed the Committee at Baqa'a Camp. Despite the harrowing tales the Committee heard, such as the story of a man still suffering from the effects of having to move dead bodies in Gaza, the Committee was struck by the families' strength and resilience, and their longing to return to a peaceful Palestine. The clear message from the families to the Special Committee, and the international community, was the need for an immediate ceasefire.

Many of the stakeholders who met with the Special Committee highlighted that the environmental impact of the war in Gaza cannot be overlooked, as it must be a key pillar of Gaza's recovery. Palestinians, like all people, have a right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. As highlighted recently by UNEP report, sewage, wastewater and solid waste management systems and facilities have collapsed, and the destruction has resulted in 39 million tons of debris, some of which is contaminated with unexploded ordnance, asbestos and other hazardous substances. The impact of thousands of unexploded ordnances as well as chemical weapons cannot be underestimated. The Special Committee was also informed that the environmental impact has the potential to affect neighboring countries and possibly the rights of others.

Although the Special Committee was unable to visit Syria, the Committee is dismayed that the Israeli plan to double the settler population in the Syrian Golan by 2027 is still ongoing, both in terms of an increase in the number of Israeli settlements as well as in the Israeli settler population. Today, Israeli settlers are distributed among 35 different settlements. The Committee notes that beside settlement expansion, commercial activity, such as construction of wind turbines has been approved. The Committee understands that Israel has granted an Israeli energy contractor a license to build between 45 and 52 wind turbines to generate power in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Committee reiterates that policies of land appropriation only foster the creation of a situation which would prolong the Israeli occupation. The

environmental impact could potentially have a detrimental impact on the health of the occupied Syrian Golan's population and also continue to limit the Syrian population's access to land and water, further worsening the overall human rights situation. In addition, the project could specifically impact the right to adequate housing, incentivize land grabbing, and potentially displace local populations, such as members of the Druz community.

The Committee is deeply concerned by reports of artificial intelligence (A.I) being deployed by the Israeli military in the war in Gaza. The use of A.I technology has a number of legal, moral, and ethical implications that have yet to be regulated at the international level. It has been reported that this technology could have contributed to the staggering number of civilian deaths, who are deemed collateral damage, as A.I programmes have moved to identify anyone who could be a potential target through a system of mass surveillance, and have bombed those targets at night - a time when family members take shelter together in one place.

During the Special Committee's annual mission to Geneva, Switzerland and Amman, Jordan, the Committee members received numerous briefings, documentation and first-hand accounts of atrocity crimes committed in Gaza. The dehumanising language used by Israeli Cabinet ministers has incited violence and given a licence to settlers and military personnel to commit gross human rights violations against the Palestinian people with impunity. The occupation of Palestine, and the apartheid system of injustice that serves it, cannot continue if there is to ever be a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As a first step, the Special Committee calls on Israel and Palestinian armed groups to urgently agree to a lasting ceasefire, to release all hostages, including detainees being held without trial, to open the boarder crossings and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, and for the ICRC to have unfettered access to those held in detention. The Special Committee urges Israel to cease its assault on the international rules-based system, multilateralism, and the rule of law. Furthermore, the Special Committee calls on all States and businesses that provide assistance in prolonging the occupation to collaborate with stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, and others, to cease their activities and support for the occupation, or risk being complicit in serious international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law violations, including possible genocide. The Palestinians' right of self-determination must be realised, and ultimately the occupation must end.

The Committee will present its next report to the General Assembly in October 2024.

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*** The United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories** was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1968 to examine the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The Special Committee is composed of three Member States: Malaysia, Senegal and Sri Lanka. This year the Member States are represented by **H.E. Mr. Syed Mohamad Hasrin Tengku Hussin**, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in New York, **H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang**, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations in New York, and **H.E. Mr. Peter Mohan Maithri Pieris**, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York (Chair of the Special Committee).

(*) [Special Committee's 2023 full report](#).

UN Human Rights, Country Pages – [Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) and [Israel](#)

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