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General Assembly
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Agenda item 5
**Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem
and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory****Security Council**
Sixty-fourth year**Identical letters dated 12 January 2009 from the Permanent
Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

On the 17th day of Israel's bloody aggression in the Gaza Strip, Palestinians and all those who value human life mourn the death of at least 905 Palestinians and pray for the recovery of at least 4,100 Palestinians, half of whom are women and children. The horrific realities on the ground are also becoming increasingly evident, with the shocking accounts of survivors recovered from under the rubble of homes that Israeli forces levelled to the ground atop its civilian inhabitants. And yet, United Nations Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) remains ignored in utter disdain by Israel, the occupying Power, pounding the people it occupies with complete disregard for their lives and well-being, as well as for international law. This criminal behaviour continues as the world watches instead of intervening to end this human tragedy.

During the dawn hours of Monday, 12 January 2009, Israeli warplanes hit dozens of homes on the northern, eastern and southern borders of Gaza City, resulting in the death of nine Palestinians, including two children and two women. Families living in the most targeted neighbourhoods on the edges of Gaza City have been appealing to paramedics and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for rescue. They are trapped, under fire, without access to food, water, or electricity. Most agonizing is that many of these families have sick and injured members whose lives are slipping away while Israeli fire continues to forbid paramedics from reaching them, preventing them from providing necessary and urgent medical aid, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Four days after the massacre of the Samouni family was committed by the Israeli occupying forces, their heart-wrenching story is now clearer. On 2 January, Israeli occupying forces raided the building which houses the Samouni family and then grouped the extended family together in one of the homes. The following day, they shelled and dropped missiles on and around the house, killing at least



30 members of the family and injuring the rest. After trying for four days to reach the area, ICRC managed to secure permission from the Israeli occupying forces standing close by, knowing there were injured and dead civilians in the house they shelled.

Palestinian paramedics have confirmed that they were ordered to keep their ambulances far away from the shelled house. When they got to the house, paramedics were shocked by what they saw. Decomposing dead bodies crowded the rooms and among them were starving injured children, distraught by their four-day ordeal and too weak to talk or move. Two of the injured boys recovered from the Samouni house were 16-year-old Ahmed Samouni and 6-year-old Abdullah. The horror that these children have witnessed cannot be translated into words and the long-term damage this horrific experience will cause is simply unthinkable. Ahmed was recovered from amidst the dead bodies of his mother and four brothers. He spent four days watching his brothers Ismail and Is'haq bleeding to death in front of his eyes.

Six-year-old Abdullah, also badly injured, was trapped inside the same house, surrounded by his dead cousins and uncles. He said they only had tomatoes to eat, and when asked what happened to his family, he said they were there, in front of him, dead. All he could do was just look at them. Tragically, Abdullah's and Ahmed's stories are just the beginning of what human rights organizations and aid workers on the ground believe will be many more to come of war crimes Israel has committed and continues to commit against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

On Sunday, 11 January 2009, during the declared three-hour lull in fighting, Israeli strikes killed 14 Palestinians, including an infant. Several Israeli artillery shells were fired on different parts of the Gaza Strip in quick succession. Israeli drones also fired a missile near the homes of Al-Karama compound, killing four, including three members of the same family. A strike by Israeli warplanes also killed 25-year-old Ibrahim A'yesh Suleiman, who was near the Al-Karama building in Beit Lahiya. In tandem with these indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian civilians, Israeli tanks, accompanied by air cover, entered the Tal Al-Hawa and Sheikh Ejleen civilian neighbourhoods southwest of Gaza City. This is the deepest incursion by Israeli tanks into Gaza since the start of its ground invasion.

Israel continues to indiscriminately pound densely populated areas in Gaza unabatedly and with the apparent intention to continue and intensify its attacks, as thousands of reservists have been sent into Gaza. Doctors in Gaza City report treating patients suffering unprecedented levels of deep burns, consistent with the use of the controversial chemical white phosphorus. Human rights activists, including Human Rights Watch, report that Israeli forces have used white phosphorus munitions, which can burn human flesh to the bone, cause respiratory problems and create fires that are difficult to extinguish, over Gaza City and Jabaliya in recent days, as well as in Khuza'a and Abasan in southern Gaza. The use of such indiscriminate munitions in densely populated areas is causing unbearable suffering to the civilian population and long-term environmental damage and health risks, which are difficult to determine at the present stage. Needless to say, this reprehensible behaviour is also in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, requiring a serious international independent investigation that would hold accountable those responsible for this unfolding human tragedy. The international community must not stand idly by and watch these crimes committed and only make statements of supposed concern.

The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, has a responsibility to put an end to these Israeli crimes and stop Israel from continuing to operate as a rogue State above international law, including by grossly violating all norms and principles that the world has put in place. Israel is a State that consistently violates international law and United Nations resolutions, possesses weapons of mass destruction and commits acts of aggression for its expansionist purposes with complete impunity. Such actions prove beyond any doubt that Israel's real aim is not peaceful coexistence with its Palestinian neighbours, but military domination. Therefore, if the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, is truly committed to ensuring that peace is established in our region, it must confront such rogue behaviour and immediately put an end to Israeli aggression against our people in Gaza and implement all United Nations resolutions, starting with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

History will condemn those who do not stand up for international humanitarian law and the plight of a people whose lives and national aspirations have been disregarded for 60 years because of international inaction. Future generations will not forgive those who watched Palestinian children crushed under the rubble and burned by Israel's war machine and will hold them responsible for this tragedy for not enforcing a solution that provides them with the protection they are entitled to. Let there be no mistake, this is not a war between two states. What is happening before our eyes is a war that Israel, the occupying Power, has waged on the people it has occupied for 41 years, trapped in the world's largest ghetto, and denied access to the most basic requirements of a normal and dignified life. What is unfolding before our eyes is a shameful chapter of world history in which innocent civilians are killed, maimed, and displaced by a merciless war machine. And it is these painful tragedies that will leave their long-lasting imprint on the collective psyche of Palestinians and the peoples of the region; for with every missile and artillery shell that Israel rains on Palestinian homes, hope for peace is also being blown to pieces. Putting an end to this tragedy is the collective responsibility of the members of the United Nations, whose credibility hangs in the balance and is undermined with every teardrop of a terrified Palestinian child and with every new grave dug for one more of Gaza's innocents.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 330 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 January 2009 (A/ES-10/435-S/2009/26), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice (as all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer