

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2334 (2016)**

delivered by

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Madam President,

Members of the Security Council,

Today's briefing is devoted to the thirty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). It covers the period from 7 December to 13 March.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem” and to “fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.” Settlement activity has, nevertheless, continued at a high rate.

During the reporting period, Israeli planning authorities advanced or approved approximately 10,600 housing units in settlements in the occupied West Bank, including 4,920 in East Jerusalem. Tenders were announced for approximately 700 units in the area of the Efrat settlement near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures accelerated across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities demolished, seized, sealed or forced people to demolish 460 structures, displacing 576 persons, including 287 children and 149 women.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction.” Unfortunately, the high number of fatal incidents across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel precludes me from detailing all.

Madam President,

In Gaza, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health (MOH), at least 1,897 Palestinians were killed, and at least 5,979 were injured during the reporting period.

According to Israeli sources, 59 hostages are still being held captive. 251 hostages were abducted on 7 October by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. Israeli sources also report 30 Israel Defense Forces soldiers killed and at least 3 injured during the reporting period.

From 7 December until the ceasefire and hostage release deal took effect on 19 January, hostilities in Gaza continued, resulting in high numbers of Palestinian casualties, continued massive displacement of civilians and widespread destruction, including to civilian infrastructure.

Palestinian armed groups continued to hold hostages in horrific conditions and fired rockets indiscriminately towards Israel.

Since the ceasefire took effect on 19 January, 25 Israeli and five Thai nationals have been released by Hamas and other armed groups, as well as the remains of eight hostages who were killed on 7 October or while in captivity, among them two children. Released hostages have described or exhibited signs of serious ill-treatment.

During the reporting period, 1,777 Palestinian prisoners and detainees were released by Israel. Some reported serious ill-treatment, sexual abuse, and humiliation during detention.

In the reporting period, at least 21 UN personnel were killed in Gaza

Meanwhile, violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued at alarming levels.

123 Palestinians, including six women and 19 children, were killed during ISF airstrikes, operations, armed exchanges, demonstrations and other incidents. Most Palestinians were killed in the context of Israeli operations in Area A, including during exchanges of fire with armed Palestinians. 924 Palestinians, including 220 children, were injured by the ISF, including 361 by tear gas inhalation and 299 by live ammunition. 117 Palestinians, including 6 children, were injured by settlers.

Madam President,

According to Israeli sources, 10 Israelis, including 2 children and 3 women, and 5 security forces personnel, were killed and another 96, including at least 3 children and ten women, and 32 ISF personnel were injured by Palestinians in shooting, stabbing and ramming attacks and other incidents.

The ISF arrested 1,711 Palestinians during operations in the occupied West Bank. Israel currently holds at least 9,406 Palestinians, including 3,405 in administrative detention according to the Israeli Prison Service.

On 19 February, Israel's Military Advocate General indicted five IDF reservists for serious abuse, including sexual abuse, of a Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman facility.

On 17 January, a Palestinian Security Forces (PSF) operation that began on 5 December against armed groups in the Jenin refugee camp ended, with 16 Palestinians killed, including six PSF personnel.

On 21 January, Israel's largest operation in the occupied West Bank since 2002 began and has since expanded across the northern West Bank in what Israeli authorities described as a counterterrorism operation. This has included the continued use of airstrikes and the deployment

of tanks, for the first time since 2002, and the demolition of residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, and displacing 40,000 people,

On 9 February, Israeli operations expanded into Nur Shams Camp in Tulkarem where, IDF soldiers shot and killed two Palestinian women, one of whom was pregnant. Two Palestinian children were killed by Israeli soldiers in separate incidents in Jenin and Hebron on 21 February, bringing the total number of children killed to eight across the occupied West Bank since the operation began.

The IDF demolished 23 residential buildings in Jenin Refugee Camp on 2 February and another 14 in Tulkarm Refugee Camp on 18 February, stating it was targeting “terrorist infrastructure.” The Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nur Shams refugee camps have been nearly emptied of their residents.

The IDF has also expanded widespread movement restrictions across the occupied West Bank since 21 January, including access to essential services and economic activity. On 23 February, the Israeli Government stated that the IDF will remain in some refugee camps for the coming year and that residents will not be able to return.

Settler-related violence continued throughout the reporting period. Between 15 and 20 January alone, for example, large groups of Israeli settlers attacked 11 Palestinian towns and villages across the occupied West Bank, injuring 17 Palestinians, including two children, and damaging property.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis also continued. In Palestinian shooting attacks on vehicles in the occupied West Bank, a 10-year-old Israeli child was killed and three Israelis injured on 11 December, and two elderly Israeli women and one policeman were killed and eight people injured on 6 January.

Madam President,

The Security Council, in its resolution 2334 (2016), called upon both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Unfortunately, such acts continued.

Hamas officials continued to call for violence and attacks against Israelis and encouraged escalation throughout the occupied West Bank. Palestinian officials, social media, and media channels continued to glorify the perpetrators of attacks against Israelis.

Senior Israeli officials continued to call for the displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, a return to full-scale war and reestablishment of settlements in Gaza. Two ministers called on the Prime Minister to "open the gates of hell" on Gaza if all hostages are not released, taking over the entire Strip, removing its population, and cutting off electricity, water, and humanitarian assistance. Some Israeli officials continued to call for the annexation of all or parts of the occupied West Bank.

Madam President,

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for “affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution.”

When the ceasefire came into force on 19 January, the surge in the entry of supplies into Gaza and improved access enabled expanded delivery of lifesaving assistance and services across Gaza by UN agencies and other humanitarian actors. Over 57,000 metric tons of food was brought into the Gaza Strip in the first month and more than 1.9 million people have received food parcels since the ceasefire began.

However, since 2 March, the entry of all humanitarian and commercial supplies into Gaza has been halted by the Israeli authorities, severely impacting humanitarian operations. Israel has also cut power to southern Gaza's desalination plant, limiting clean water access for 600,000 people.

On 1 February, medical evacuations started through Rafah crossing into Egypt. According to WHO, between 12,000 and 14,000 people, including over 4,500 children, remain in urgent need of medical evacuation

On 18 February, the World Bank, the UN, and the EU, in consultation with the Palestinian Authority (PA), released the Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment report for Gaza and the occupied West Bank, which estimated \$53.2 billion is needed over the next decade, primarily for Gaza.

On 30 January, Israeli legislation that seeks to prevent UNRWA from operating in the territory that Israel regards as being part of the State of Israel, which includes East Jerusalem, came into effect. On 18 February, Israeli Forces and municipality personnel forcefully entered the UNRWA Kalandia Training Centre in East Jerusalem, fired tear gas and sound bombs in its vicinity, and ordered its immediate evacuation, impacting at least 350 students and 30 staff members. Israeli police officers also went to several UNRWA schools in occupied East Jerusalem and ordered their closure.

The PA's financial situation remains precarious. On 12 January, the Israeli Minister of Finance announced the full repayment of debt it claims was owed by the PA to the Israeli Electric Company by transferring \$540 million of the \$1.2 billion of Palestinian clearance revenue that Israel has withheld from the PA since October 2023.

President Abbas issued a decree on 10 February cancelling payments by the PA to families of Palestinians killed during or imprisoned following attacks on Israelis. The decree specified that social welfare support based on need will be provided to families through a separate entity.

Madam President,

In resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council also called upon all States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.” No new steps are known to have been taken in the reporting period.

Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon “all parties to continue, inter alia, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process.”

On 19 January and 17 February, the third and fourth meetings of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution were held in Oslo and Cairo, respectively. The meetings continued to advance efforts towards the implementation of the two State solution, while supporting the ceasefire and hostage release deal.

On 4 March, Egypt hosted an emergency Summit of the League of Arab States, which endorsed the Arab Islamic Gaza reconstruction plan prepared by Egypt and the PA.

Madam President,

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

1. I once again strongly condemn the horrific acts of terror by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023 and the continued holding of hostages in Gaza. Hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. I strongly condemn the reported ill-treatment of hostages, as well as the fact that there are reasonable grounds to believe that hostages may be subjected to sexual violence and abuse. I also reiterate my condemnation of Hamas’s abhorrent public displays accompanying the release of living and deceased hostages. While in captivity, hostages must be treated humanely and allowed to receive assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross.
2. I again unequivocally condemn the widespread killing and injury of civilians, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza. Nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. I mourn the UN staff killed in Gaza and strongly condemn the killing of all humanitarian personnel. I reiterate my call for the full investigation of all such incidents and accountability for any violations of international law that may have been committed. I also strongly condemn the reported ill-treatment, including sexual abuse, of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli detention facilities and recall that their release must also be carried out in a dignified way. I stress the importance of ensuring the humane treatment of all individuals deprived of their liberty, including freedom from any form of torture or abuse.
3. I also condemn indiscriminate attacks and the use of human shields, which are prohibited by international humanitarian law. I urge all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.
4. I reiterate my call for a sustained ceasefire and urge the parties to redouble efforts to end human suffering. I commend the efforts of the mediators – Egypt, Qatar and the United States – to facilitate the implementation of the deal in full, as well as concerted international efforts, including in the region, to support an end to the war and plan for recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. I reject the forced displacement of the Palestinian population from any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which would constitute a

grave violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. I strongly reject any form of ethnic cleansing.

5. I am appalled at the horrific humanitarian situation. Humanitarian aid is not negotiable. While the surge in humanitarian aid has been crucial to saving lives in Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. The UN has proven that, with access, the coordinated response can deliver the aid that people need. I strongly condemn the halting of humanitarian assistance into Gaza by Israeli authorities and urge the immediate resumption of humanitarian and commercial deliveries.
6. The escalation of violence in the occupied West Bank is deeply troubling. Alongside the rising death toll, Palestine refugee camps in the northern West Bank are being emptied and are sustaining massive infrastructure damage during Israeli operations. The number of displaced Palestinians continues to rise, and residents continue to be denied the right to return home. I am deeply concerned by any long-term presence of Israeli security forces in the camps, which would further undermine the Palestinian Authority and be contrary to Israel's obligation to end its unlawful continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as affirmed by the International Court of Justice.
7. I urge security forces to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable to protect life. I strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror. I am alarmed by the lethal attacks carried out by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, including sometimes in the proximity and with the support of Israeli security forces, as well as by Palestinians against Israelis. All perpetrators must be held accountable. The continued use of heavy weaponry in the occupied West Bank, including in residential areas, is extremely concerning. I also recall that Israel, as the Occupying Power, has a responsibility to ensure that the civilian population is protected against all acts of violence.
8. The relentless expansion of Israeli settlements is dramatically altering the landscape and demographics of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestinians are increasingly confined into shrinking and disconnected areas, presenting an existential threat to the prospect of a contiguous, viable, independent Palestinian state. I reiterate that settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law. The demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures entail numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. I once again urge the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and recall the findings by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, which declared, inter alia, that the State of Israel is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
9. I reiterate my call to the parties for the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem to be respected and upheld, taking into account the special and historic role of Jordan.

10. The implementation of two Knesset laws concerning UNRWA could dramatically hinder efforts to ease human suffering. I reiterate that there is no alternative to UNRWA. I condemn the breach of the inviolability of United Nations premises in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the attempt to forcibly enter UNRWA schools and to seek their closure. National legislation cannot alter Israel's obligations under international law.
11. I welcome ongoing efforts by regional countries, international partners, and the Palestinian Authority to plan for Gaza's reconstruction, including the Gaza reconstruction plan endorsed by at the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The UN will continue to work closely with the Palestinian Authority, and all stakeholders, to ensure a future for Gaza that provides for protection, recovery and reconstruction for Palestinians to remain in Gaza, and security for Israel. This will require establishing appropriate security and governance frameworks. Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, must be treated as one: politically, economically, and administratively.
12. We must work collectively to establish a political framework that outlines tangible, irreversible, and time-bound steps. The occupation must end as rapidly as possible. A viable two-State solution – Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side-by-side in peace and security, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, previous agreements, and international law, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States is long overdue. The United Nations will continue to support all efforts towards that goal.

Thank you.