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The Recent Attacks on Gaza and The Position of The International Community

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Introduction:

In the 21st century, human rights violations taking place in Jerusalem remain still. These violations have been practiced for more than 70 years. Since the declaration of the Zionist movement to establish the state of “Israel” in 1948, Jerusalem has witnessed many attacks and violations that included use of violence against civilians, increase of the barbaric arrest’ campaigns, establishment of Jewish settlements on Palestinian territories with an increase in forced displacement and reduction of the size of Palestinian lands.

These events and attacks, which has been in existence for more than 7 decades, has recently worsened, especially with the Supreme Court issuing a decision on May 2, 2021 to forcibly expel the residents of Sheikh Jarrah, and the evacuation of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, which depended on the use of weapons against the residents of the neighborhood to forcible displace them. Attacks has also continued for more than 11 days, which required a quick intervention from the civil society.

The Security Council has also expressed its deep concerns about the attacks taking place in Jerusalem, in addition Israel’s obligation to stop the demolitions, evacuations, and its necessity to abide by international covenants and treaties related to maintaining peace and security.

Moreover, many Western and Arab countries have condemned the actions and crimes that are being committed against the rights of the Palestinians in the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, in particular, and the ongoing violations in Jerusalem, in general.

In this framework, the article attempts to watch all forms of violations, attacks, and crimes that are committed by the occupied authorities against the Palestinians; in addition, it monitors the Security Council and the United Nations’ positions, as well as the positions of various Western and Arab countries.

First: Civil Violations and Humanitarian Damage

Recently Gaza Strip has been subject to many violations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities. These violations included civil violations, which compromised an increase in the establishment of Jewish settlements, accompanied with the demolitions and bombing of Palestinian citizens’ residential buildings.

To clarify this, we present the following violations:

1. The Expansion and Increase of the Number of Jewish Settlements:

Arab dictionaries, in general, and 'al-Waseet' lexicon, in specific, indicates the term "settlement" as the land in which a foreigner resides, and makes it his home against its people's will.

The Jewish settlement in Palestine is the dream of the Zionist entity, which the Zionist entity has manipulated by using religious beliefs and tendencies to achieve it. By accomplishing that dream, the Zionist occupation forces committed many crimes, which reached its peak. By tracking the operations of the Israeli occupation authorities, we found that they are working toward establishing more Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

According to the report of the Central Statistics Sector for the year 2020, which monitored the conditions of the Palestinian people, a significant increase in the pace of building and expanding the Israeli settlements in the West Bank have been recorded. The Israeli occupation authorities have approved the construction of 6,719 colonial units, in addition to 12,159 colonial units and 11 colonial outposts during 2020.

The point which clearly and explicitly clarifies the violations committed by the occupation authorities against international laws and customs, is the European Union's declaration that the settlements located on the occupied Palestinian territories are in violation of international law.

2. Bombing of Residential Buildings and Use of Violence for Forced Displacement

In order to build settlements, Israel occupation authorities directs itself toward destructing and bombing Palestinian citizens' residential buildings in order to reduce their geographical area. In order to implement this plan, the occupation authorities worked to issue and ratify decisions and laws by the Israeli Central Court of Jerusalem in order to legalize the acts. Accordingly, the Supreme Court decided on May 2, 2021 to issue a decision to evacuate the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and forcibly displace the Palestinian citizens. The decision resulted in many violations on the native residents of the neighborhood, whereby the Israeli occupation authorities relied on brutal methods to displace the residents.

The international and local media have monitored these violations, and according to a press report issued by the United Nations Agency on the 14th of May 2021, the official spokesperson for the Agency stated that the Israeli authorities had caused many serious damages to civilian property, especially in densely populated areas throughout the Gaza Strip.

As a result of the Israeli air strikes that targeted buildings in the Gaza Strip, approximately 450 buildings in the Gaza Strip were destroyed and displaced, and more than 52,000 Palestinians and

nearly 600,000 students were forced to drop out of school, according to the data provided by the United Nations Relief Agency on the 18th of May.

These crimes committed by the Israeli authorities are considered to be international crimes that violate the Palestinians civil rights as well as international conventions. In accordance with the international legal protection of human rights in armed conflict, international law obliges governments to respect the right to housing, which means that governments should refrain from forcibly or arbitrarily evicting people or groups or any form or another of these crimes.

Second: Destruction of the Health Sector

Violations also included the health sector, despite the fact that international law criminalizes those violations clearly. It is explicit in international humanitarian law, in which it obliges the occupying power to care for the wounded and sick, by doing their utmost to ensure the availability of food and medical supplies and the provision of public health and hygiene services in the occupied territory.

However, we find that the attacks conducted by the Israeli authorities violate these laws as well, nor did the Israeli government seemed interested in, rather, it increased its attacks. Since, the beginning of the events of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, on May 11, until the issuance of the last report of the Ministry of Health in Gaza on May 19, 2021, more than 219 Palestinian citizens have been killed and 1570 have been injured, among them 768 men, 322 women and 480 children. The report stated that the most targeted age groups by the occupation authorities ranged from 18 to 39 years old.

The attacks did not only stop on targeting civilians, but it also extended to target health facilities that work to provide medical care, and assistance. 22 health facilities suffered partial and total damage as a result of the continuous Israeli shelling, which led to the targeting of health care workers and the killings of a number of the medical staff, resulting in an increased pressure on the health sector and its inability to provide medical services for patients.

The situation has further exacerbated in particular with the spread of the Coronavirus, increasing targeting by the Israeli forces on residential areas, displacement of families and the increase of numbers in shelters. Shelters became overcrowded, which resulted in the transformation of those shelters into a dangerous environment for the rapid spread of Covid-19, leading to the spread of the third wave in the Gaza Strip. The situation has further worsened with the targeting of "Healthy Sands" clinics, which is considered the only laboratory in Gaza City, as it resulted in the cancellation of vaccines for the Corona virus, the postponement of doctors' appointments, and the halt of drug deliveries, leading to serious damage to hospitals and clinics. It has also

resulted in an increase in the number of Corona virus infections, as the infection rate reached 30% of the total samples that were examined, and there were more than 101 critical cases.

Third: Targeting Media Centers and Suppressing Press Freedom

On a daily basis, the Israeli occupation authorities suppressed and targeted media outlets that worked to expose international attacks and crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian citizens, as Israel did not only depend on killings, forced displacement and arrests for the Palestinians, but also it extended to the assault on freedom of opinion and expression, the prevention of the right to know, and the obstruction of accurate and independent media coverage of the conflict that aims to uncover the crimes committed by the Israeli authorities.

The Israeli authorities dropped two bombs on “El-Galaa Building” with the aim of targeting media centers that monitor the attacks carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people. This building included many media agencies such as the American news agency, Associated Press, Al-Jazeera news agency, and many others.

International law criminalizes such attacks, in particular, according to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Fourth: Palestinian Women in the Midst of Armed Conflict and Its Impact on Public Health

It is known that armed conflicts have a greater impact on women and children, as they are of the most vulnerable groups. The Security Council report of 2000 stated that the vast majority that are negatively affected by armed conflicts are women and children, where they are left as refugees and displaced persons. They are considered to be the most exploited by the armed groups in their countries.

Palestinian women have been subjected to the greatest impact from the attacks, as the Secretary of the United Nations Population Fund expressed in a statement that he is “concerned” of the number of civilian casualties, including children and women, due to the current escalation”; in addition, there are currently about 210, 000 pregnant and breastfeeding women, along with the daily maternity cases, where 365 women give birth every day, 150 women in Gaza and 215 in the West Bank.

This is why the Regional Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Louay Shabana, called for a cessation of hostilities, to ensure the full protection of civilians and the safety of civilians, women and adolescent girls.

Fifth: Targeting Food Security

Israeli violations included restricting humanitarian aid, whereby the Israeli forces worked to weaken the food aid that reaches the Palestinians. The United Nations agency, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), called on the Israeli occupation authorities to allow food aid to enter the Gaza Strip. In addition, Mr. Al-Rakieh stated that food aid has been restricted while humanitarian workers continued to provide field assistance, yet, assistance has been significantly restricted due to the prevailing insecurity. He also indicated that the Israeli authorities closed the “Erez” crossing in the northern Gaza Strip on the 10th of May, including the “Karm Abu Salem” crossing in the south, which is considered to be the most important channel for transporting goods and fuel to Gaza Strip.

The continuity of restricting assistance constitutes dire consequences and impedes the continuation of delivering essential services to the Palestinians. In addition, fuel reserves are limited, and electricity supply will be reduced in the following days, which will again affect the availability of health, water and sanitation services.

In order to confront those violations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people, the report attempts to highlight countries’ efforts to stop these attacks, as many countries have decided to confront the existing conflict between the occupation authorities and the popular resistance.

1. State’s Reactions to the Attacks of Gaza

Despite the violations that were monitored by both the international and national media, and the confirmation of those violations by international organizations, headed by the United Nations Relief Agency, the United Nations Population Agency and the United Nations, and the United Nations for Humanitarian Affairs, the European Union position was inactive, as it did not issue any decisions to stop these violations. Rather, the European Union has only sent emergency aid to Palestine in 2021, an average of 34 million euros.

On the other side, the Security Council has neglected the attacks, violations, and war crimes committed by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinians, and has also disapproved a decision that works to stop these attacks, due to the different positions of the council's member states on the Palestinian conflict.

European countries positions have also varied from one country to another, as some shared solidarity, others were biased and supported the occupation authorities.

We find that the United States of America did not stop at neglecting the situation, but rather worked on worsening it by signing an arms deal worth 735 million dollars with Israel. The situation could further deteriorate as the deal serves to assist the occupation authorities in committing further violations and attacks against the Palestinian people, creating unequal confrontation between the two parties.

British Parliament member, Julie Elliott, also expressed, during her speech in the United Nations Committee held under the title "International Parliamentary Support for the Palestinian Cause", that it's not an equal war, whereby hundreds of innocent people, women and children were killed. She also called all parties in her country "to end the United Kingdom's sale of arms to Israel that could be used to subdue the Palestinian population."

Moreover, China worked to pressure the Security Council to stop the hostilities and restore the peace process to the region, where China's permanent representative to the United Nations, Zhang Jun, stated that China is working to adopt a statement from the Security Council to stop violations committed against the civilians. Zhang Jun has also strongly condemned the acts of violence against the civilians.

2. The Position of the Arab Countries on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

The Palestinian cause has received great attention from some Arab countries, but these interests varied. Tunisia, for example, condemned the attacks that are being carried out by the occupation authorities through the statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Tunisians Abroad, "Mr. Othman Al-Jarandi" during a Security Council meeting, whereby he affirmed that Tunisia will not deviate from its consistent historical position in supporting of the Palestinian cause.

Algeria also condemned the barbaric acts committed by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people, through the speech of the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Sabri Boukadoum", and his participation in the emergency meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Jordan also had a major role in resolving the crisis, whereby the Jordanian Foreign Ministry submitted an official memorandum confirming the invalidity of the decisions taken by the Israeli court on occupied East Jerusalem, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

3. The Role of Egypt in Easing the Situation in Palestine

Although some countries withdrew and ignored the major violations carried out by the Israeli occupation authorities against Palestinian civilians, Egypt, on the contrary, had a leading role in stopping the conflict that Palestine witnessed in the recent period. Egypt's leadership varied among political support, relief responses, and development initiatives that included financial support.

- **Political support:** With the escalation of events and attacks carried out by the Israeli authorities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has initiated negotiations with its Israeli counterpart to make a ceasefire and end the conflict, in addition to sending two security delegations to activate the armistice process.

- **Relief responses:** With the increase in violations, the exacerbation of the number of wounded Palestinians, and the appeals of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, which stated that the health sector needs an estimated 6.46 million US dollars to be able to continue providing the necessary services, the Egyptian Ministry of Health worked on opening Rafah crossing and prepared 11 hospitals, including Rafah Hospital, Sheikh Zuwayed and Bir al-Abed Hospital, to receive the wounded from the Gaza Strip. In addition to the medical and food aid provided by the Egyptian Red Crescent to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

- **Reconstructive initiatives:** The Egyptian aid did not stop only on the provision of temporary and partial support, but also worked on providing sustainable support, where the president's efforts, after achieving negotiations and establishing a truce, worked to estimate the resulted impacts of the bombings carried out by the Israeli authorities, resulting in the creation of the "Gaza Reconstruction" initiative, where the Egyptian government allocated 500 million dollars for the reconstruction of the civilians' facilities that have been targeted.

- **Popular support:** Support was not only provided by the Egyptian government, but also the people played a major role in supporting the Palestinian cause, by rejecting and denouncing the brutal attacks carried out by the Israeli occupation authorities. The Egyptian people utilized soft power in solidarity with the Palestinian people, through the use of social media, which added pressure on the Israeli authorities.

The Palestinian cause is considered to be a major issue in the Arab world and a humanitarian issue on a global level. The violations that are practiced not only violate the right of the Palestinians, but also violate the universal human rights, as Israel's insistence on conducting numerous operations of discrimination, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement against Palestinians, and the Israel state's adherence to the decision to build settlements and demolish civilian's facilities are all international human rights violations.

These violations and attacks assure that Israel's actions are not coincidental, but rather its Israel's vision and strategy to implement its goals that were set 20 years ago. We may find that the current events are a visual reality for Israel's visions. In 2020, Israel announced to implement its plan and vision, "Israel Plan 2020", which was issued in 1997 and in which it expressed "that the current demographic growth trends, if they continue, threaten the future of Israel as a Jewish state, and that a Zionist demographic policy is a must in order to guarantee the Jewish identity of the State of Israel."

Therefore, the international community must confront these attacks, not only the ones that are already existing, but also address attacks and future visions that pave the way for more future human rights violations, in addition to countering Zionism's hopes that Israel is currently implementing. It is also necessary to confront countries that support these violations and create unequal confrontations between the Israeli occupation forces and the Palestinians resistance.