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**Statement by Mr. Ammar Hijazi, Second Secretary, before the Economic and Social Council, Item 11: Economic and social repercussion of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, 60<sup>th</sup> Session, 19 July 2005.**

Mr. Chairperson,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor during this session of the Council, allow me to extend to you and the members of the Bureau our congratulations upon your election and to wish you all the success in your endeavors. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report submitted under this item, contained in document A/60/65-E/2005/13, as well as to the Secretariat of ESCWA for their invaluable and tireless efforts.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Secretary-General's report discusses in detail the continued violation of the Palestinian people's basic human rights by Israel, the occupying Power, and the detrimental effect that Israel's 38-year-old occupation continues to have on all aspects of Palestinian life. Indeed, Palestinian civilians, in particular Palestinian children, have continued to bear the brunt of the aggressive military assaults that the occupying Power has relentlessly conducted against Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps. This has only led to the catastrophic socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people, in which an economy where GDP per capita plummeted by 37 percent compared to 1999 and a situation where 38 percent of the population have become completely dependent on food rations. These shocking figures were not caused by a natural disaster; rather, they are the direct result of Israel's brutal military occupation and its systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people, in total contempt of international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairperson,

Economic development and prosperity cannot be achieved in conditions of repression and occupation. Instead, any economy needs political stability, free movement of peoples and goods, and other basic conditions in order to thrive and prosper. These conditions are what the Palestinian economy is lacking. It is important to stress here that the Palestinian people's realization of their inalienable right to self-determination, including the establishment of a sovereign state, is a prerequisite to securing the socio-economic conditions necessary for real economic development.

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Mr. Chairperson,

Perhaps no policy is as far-reaching in its detrimental effects on Palestinian lives as the illegal policy of settlement construction by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The international community is in agreements that this policy is illegal as it constitutes a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Yet, the weight of international humanitarian law and countless resolutions have not compelled Israel, the occupying Power, to end such a policy. As the report details, Israeli settlement construction has increased throughout the past year, with the occupying Power confiscating hundreds of hectares of Palestinian land for the sole purpose of territorial expansion, all while offering "exceptional financial incentives to Israeli settlers in the West Bank".

Another policy that is equally as dangerous is that of the construction of the expansionist Wall by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. The report concludes that "the damage caused by the destruction of land and property for the [Wall] is long-lasting and undermines Palestinians' ability to recover should a political solution allow it". This statement reflects the grave danger that the construction of the Israeli expansionist Wall poses on the Palestinian economic and political rights and prospects now and in the future. Not only is Israel's unlawful construction of its Wall creating illegal facts on the ground through the *de facto* annexation of Palestinian land, but it will effectively render the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict physically impossible to achieve.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is important to highlight that in July 2004, the Advisory Opinion rendered by International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Israel's Wall and General Assembly Resolution ES-10/15 adopted thereafter, concluded that Israel is under a legal obligation to, *inter alia*, terminate its breaches of international law and cease its construction of the Wall and to dismantle the sections which have been constructed to date. Unfortunately, Israel, the occupying Power, once again, has turned a deaf ear to the international community's condemnation of its expansionist Wall by continuing to erect the Wall deep into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Additionally, on the eve of the first anniversary of the ICJ Advisory Opinion, and in an act of shameless defiance of international law, Israel, the occupying Power, approved a plan to complete construction of the Wall around occupied East Jerusalem by September. The plan would result in isolating at least 65,000 Palestinian residents from their property, hospitals, universities, and schools. This latest announced plan must be seen in the context of Israel's earlier adopted plans to connect the illegal settlement of "Ma'ale Adumim" with Western Jerusalem in an attempt to encircle Occupied East Jerusalem with illegal settlements and create even more facts on the ground that would sever the Occupied City from its natural Palestinian surroundings and bisect the West Bank.

Mr. Chairperson,

Throughout the period under report, Israeli occupying forces continued to use excessive and indiscriminate use of lethal force, using all means of heavy weaponry, displaying the total and utter disregard for Palestinian life. This is sadly manifested in the over 869 Palestinians killed by the occupying forces over the past year, which now brings the total number of Palestinian civilians killed from September 2000 to date to over 3,670. It is appalling to note that 41 of those willfully killed were UNRWA pupils-school children-some even killed while sitting at their school desks.

Moreover, throughout this period, the occupying Power has also detained and imprisoned nearly eight thousand Palestinians, including at least 259 Palestinian children. Such illegal confinement has varied in duration and thousands of those detained and imprisoned have been subjected to severe harassment and punishment, physical abuse and even torture by the occupying forces.

The report also details the extensive destruction of the infrastructure, agriculture, and property that the repeated Israeli military assaults on Palestinian population centers have had in the past year. The reports points out that in the past year alone, Israeli occupation forces demolished at least 2,188 homes, rendering tens of thousands of Palestinians homeless. The sense of displacement that this policy afflicts on Palestinian families is indescribable. Moreover, the severe movement restrictions imposed on Palestinian persons and goods have been an incapacitating factor in crippling Palestinian economic growth. Prolonged closures have resulted in a devastation of Palestinian life in all spheres and sectors – social, economic, political, health, cultural and educational.

Mr. Chairperson,

If the occupying Power continues with its illegal practices and policies against the Palestinian people, the grave social and economic situation described in the report will impede the Palestinian people's efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The Palestinian people look to the United Nations to continue its efforts to effectively put an end to all illegal Israeli actions in the Occupied Arab Territories, including the Syrian Golan, as the only way to ensure a life of dignity, prosperity, and growth for our future generations. Israel must be compelled to respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The occupying Power must finally make a choice: either more Walls and settlements or peace and prosperity.

Further, the international community must award this issue its urgent attention and take the necessary measures to bring a halt to the Israeli destruction of the Palestinian economy and the natural resources of the Palestinian people and to cease Israel's destruction of the natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan. The sustainable option for addressing the current economic and social deprivation lies in lifting the occupation-an occupation that continues to impose untold misery and suffering on the Palestinian people. Once that is accomplished, the Palestinian people will be able to establish their independent State, which would finally enable them to live a normal life and to pursue economic and social development free from Israeli occupation, subjugation and destruction.