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Ending the Illegal Annexation of East Jerusalem is Essential for a Just Peace¹

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

As Palestinian human rights organisations, we mark the 44th year of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem with growing disillusionment. Since the initial annexation in 1967 and Israel's declaration in 1980 that Jerusalem is its undivided capital, a web of discriminatory policies has targeted Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem. Urban planning restrictions, revocation of residency and denial of family unification, coupled with unabated settlement construction, are assisting Israel achieve a Jewish demographic majority in East Jerusalem.

Between 2009 and 2010, more than 1,300 demolition orders were issued in East Jerusalem, placing some 3,600 Palestinians at risk of displacement. Residents of the Silwan neighbourhood anticipate this same fate due to the construction of the "City of David" archaeological park. The Annexation Wall cuts off Palestinian neighbourhoods, isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Since 1995, Israel has revoked the residency status of over 10,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites.

Earlier this month, the Israeli cabinet met in the occupied Old City to reaffirm Israel's commitment to a unified Jerusalem, while a new bill proposes to rebrand Palestinian neighbourhoods with Hebrew names.

Mr. President, Member States,

These illegal practices cast an ominous shadow on Palestinian Jerusalemites' ability to remain in their city.

International law unequivocally prohibits Israel from claiming sovereignty over occupied territory and creating facts on the ground that change its status. Furthermore, Israel's coercive policies resulting in the removal of Palestinian Jerusalemites amount to the war crime of forcible transfer.

While several Security Council resolutions have declared measures that alter the character of Jerusalem null and void, the acquiescent inaction of the international community allows Israel to entrench control over the city at the expense of its Palestinian residents.

¹ Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Aldameer Association for Human Rights, Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Defence for Children International - Palestine Section, Ensan Center for Democracy and Human Rights, and Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies also share the views expressed in this statement.

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Israel's ostensible commitment to peace is contradicted by its relentless unlawful measures in East Jerusalem and other strategic areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), like the Jordan Valley. As long as the Palestinian right to self-determination remains under attack, instability will continue, as demonstrated by Israel's violent repression of recent "Nakba" and "Naksa" day initiatives.

We urge the member States of this Council to promptly uphold their legal obligations by:

- adopting effective measures to induce Israel to stop its violations of international law; and
- abstaining from actions that condone Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and other areas of the OPT.

Thank you