



**Briefing to the United Nations Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East,  
including the Palestinian Question**

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Thank you, Mr. President and members of the Security Council for the opportunity to address you today.

I grew up in Jerusalem and likewise raised my children here. My Orthodox Jewish upbringing deepened my understanding of the profound role of religion and tradition in shaping attachment to the city. Jerusalem is in every meaning of the word—*my home*—yet also *home* for the many Palestinians who live alongside Israelis like me. When I think of Jerusalem, I cannot imagine it without the multiplicity of peoples, religions and historical narratives it contains. It is precisely this diversity that makes Jerusalem so extraordinary, but also what transforms it into an arena of acute conflict.

For this reason, I joined Ir Amim – an Israeli organization that envisions an equitable and sustainable Jerusalem with an agreed political future. Ir Amim means "City of Peoples," which reflects our vision of Jerusalem as a shared city, the current home and future capital of two peoples with equal measures of attachments and claims to the city. Yet, the rights and liberties I enjoy as an Israeli citizen are not afforded to the city's 350,000 Palestinian residents, who today make up nearly 40% of its population.

Since the 1967 occupation and unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem—in contravention to International Law— Israeli authorities have employed a system of discriminatory policies to weaken the Palestinian hold on the city. These policies have included land confiscation and settlement building, denial of citizenship and political rights, permanent residency revocations, insufficient service provision, and severe restrictions on planning and building in East Jerusalem.

This not only violates the individual and collective rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem, but also contravenes UN Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2334, and destabilizes conditions for an agreed resolution based on a two-state framework with two capitals in Jerusalem.

The recent escalation in violence and tension in our region further underscored the centrality of Jerusalem to the conflict and its wider implications on regional stability and security. The main trigger behind the clashes was the ongoing pressures to undermine Palestinian rights to Jerusalem, exemplified by the continued erosion of the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the arbitrary closure of the Damascus Gate plaza, a central Palestinian public space, during Ramadan and the pending evictions of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah.

Indeed, in recent years, evictions of Palestinian families and home demolitions have significantly grown, serving as acute levers of Palestinian displacement from Jerusalem.

**Mr. President, I am speaking before the council today because these measures of Palestinian displacement have recently increased in scope and scale in an unprecedented manner. A total of four Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, numbering approximately three thousand individuals, are simultaneously under impending threat of mass expulsion. These communities are: Sheikh Jarrah, Batan al-Hawa and Al Bustan in Silwan, and Al Walajeh.**

Many of these families have exhausted their limited legal remedies, which could lead to a devastating wave of evictions and demolitions in the coming months.

Beyond the geopolitical implications, these measures severely violate Palestinian rights to housing and shelter and the right to family and community life, as an occupied minority group protected under International Law. The Israeli government presents their actions as legitimate within a legal system underpinned by democratic institutions. However, these institutions are largely inaccessible to East Jerusalem Palestinians who are devoid of political rights and the power to participate in the legislative and policymaking processes which govern their lives. The legal framework is thus inherently discriminatory and leaves East Jerusalem Palestinians disproportionately vulnerable to forced displacement.

The two communities facing mass eviction are Sheikh Jarrah and Batan al-Hawa, Silwan, located on opposite ends of the Old City Basin. Nearly 150 Palestinian families - numbering over 1000 people - are at risk of displacement based on discriminatory laws. These legal mechanisms afford Jews with the right to reclaim assets in East Jerusalem lost in 1948 now inhabited by Palestinians, while denying Palestinians the same right to recover lost properties on the Israeli side of the Green Line. Many of the families facing eviction are Palestinian refugees who lost homes in Israel in 1948 and now stand to be displaced for a second time by settlers who have no connection to the original Jewish owners or occupants of the properties.

Although successive Israeli governments have framed these cases as standard property disputes, they are rather part of a systematic campaign aimed at uprooting Palestinian families and supplanting them with settlers to create Israeli enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. These settler compounds are accompanied by the daily presence of security forces, which together generate constant friction and severely disrupt life in the community.

Currently, several eviction cases in both neighborhoods are pending at the Supreme Court with a major hearing scheduled for August 2 pertaining to four families in Sheikh Jarrah. Concurrently, the Attorney General has been asked by the Supreme Court to submit a legal opinion by August 29 in one of the cases in Batan al-Hawa, which will likely impact the additional cases involving 80 more families in the neighborhood.

Mr. President, the court's request indicates a possible understanding that these cases are more than a private real estate dispute, but rather one of national interest with far-reaching political

and moral ramifications, and therefore requires government weigh-in. Through the Attorney General's opinion, the Israeli government is now being compelled to take an explicit position on these eviction proceedings and their broader implications.

It is therefore essential to hold the Israeli government accountable and to urge it to utilize this opportunity to prevent the large-scale displacement of these communities.

In parallel, threats of mass demolition loom over 140 homes in Al Bustan, Silwan and Al Walajeh, placing some 1800 more Palestinians at risk of displacement. Upcoming court decisions in August concerning both of these communities could immediately accelerate demolitions. In Al Bustan, demolitions are being advanced to make way for a nationalistic archeological park which would serve to bolster the Israeli presence in the area and further alter the character of the Old City Basin. In Al Walajeh, similar measures are being carried out due to its strategic location between the southern part of East Jerusalem and the West Bank settlements in the Bethlehem vicinity, an area targeted for further de-facto or formal annexation.

Demolition orders are served under the pretext of lacking building permits which are nearly impossible to procure due to the absence of proper zoning plans which the Israeli authorities have consistently neglected to advance and/or approve. Israeli planning authorities have continually blocked efforts by residents in both these areas to authorize their homes and promote plans to enable residential development of their communities.

As in the case of evictions, the legal system in these cases is likewise being utilized in a discriminatory manner for political purposes.

Mr. President: a total of four communities of 3000 Palestinians are currently at risk of losing their homes in East Jerusalem. These are not private property disputes, but rather a manifestation of a national policy aimed at changing the demographic composition of East Jerusalem, which simultaneously deprives Palestinians of their basic right to housing and the right to family and community life.

In his recent remarks to his European counterparts, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, stated, "What we need to do now is to make sure that no steps are taken that will prevent the possibility of peace in the future. We need to improve the lives of Palestinians. Whatever is humanitarian, I will be for it."

**To fulfill this statement, the Israeli government must therefore be urged to:**

1. Immediately cease all demolitions and evictions of Palestinian families
2. Advance proper urban planning and equitable housing policies in East Jerusalem
3. Ensure the provision of fair and adequate services to all of the city's residents
4. Safeguard both peoples' rights to their homes and the city and recognize their historic, religious and political attachments to Jerusalem.
5. Finally, engage with the Palestinian national leadership and together, with the support of the international community, foster conditions for a sustainable resolution to the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on international law and in line with UN Security Council Resolutions.

In the absence of a political agreement in the foreseeable future, the two peoples will continue to share a complex urban reality predicated on a delicate weave of symbiotic relations and interdependence in Jerusalem. Given the current reality, dialogue and cooperation must be cultivated, and measures that exacerbate tension should be avoided

These elements must constitute a basis for negotiations towards a viable solution, out of the understanding that in every possible political constellation, the two peoples will continue to live alongside each other in Jerusalem.

Thank you.