

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

24 May 2021

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Minister Payne

RE: UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION MUST ADDRESS VIOLATIONS IN ISRAEL/OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Amnesty International welcomes the UN Human Rights Council's decision to hold a special session to address the rapidly deteriorating situation across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Within a matter of weeks, the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has escalated from a crackdown by Israeli forces against peaceful Palestinian demonstrators in East Jerusalem to a full-scale armed conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza.

As the death toll continues to mount – with more than 230 killed in Gaza and 12 killed in Israel - it is vital that the perpetrators of human rights violations, including unlawful attacks and crimes under international law are not permitted to commit abuses unchecked.

The UN Human Rights Council special session should ensure accountability for violations even given the current ceasefire, and after an end to the current hostilities. It must address possible war crimes in Gaza, including deadly attacks on Palestinian homes and deliberate destruction of civilian property, as well as the indiscriminate rocket fire from Palestinian armed groups into Israeli population centres. The session must also tackle the root causes of the conflict including the Israel's illegal settlements, the blockade of Gaza and the forced eviction and dispossession of Palestinian families such as those in Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem.

I urge the Australian government to work to ensure that the Human Rights Council establishes an investigative mechanism that can collect and preserve evidence of crimes and violations, and that would support and coordinate with the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court. Together these institutions must do everything in their power to break the decades-long cycle of impunity that pervades the crisis in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

For further information, or to discuss and organise a meeting, please contact Joel MacKay at joel.mackay@amnesty.org.au or 0424 242 112.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SKlintworth', written in a cursive style.

Sam Klintworth
National Director
Amnesty International Australia