



**Statement by the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities,
Robert Piper, on the 50th Anniversary of Israel's Occupation**

Jerusalem, 6 June 2017

This week marks 50 years since the start of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For humanitarians this is the most long-standing protection crisis in the UN's history.

It should be obvious, but it bears repeating, that Occupation is ugly. Living under foreign military rule for years on end, generates despair, suffocates initiative and leaves generations in a kind of political and economic limbo.

Israel's occupation is backed by force. Accompanying that ever-present security apparatus have been deliberate policies that have isolated Palestinian communities from each other, ruptured social cohesion, profoundly limited economic activity and deprived many of their basic rights – of movement, of expression, of access to health and much more. In too many cases, these policies have violated international humanitarian law as well as the human rights instruments to which Israel is a party.

One direct result of these policies has been the creation of chronic humanitarian needs among Palestinians. In 2017, nearly half of the 4.8 million Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) will need humanitarian aid of one kind or another. Many of them require food assistance to compensate for lost livelihoods, others legal aid, and others still, will need water, healthcare or shelter. In a 'normal' year – ie. one without a conflict in Gaza – around US\$1 billion is allocated from scarce global resources to support the various humanitarian operations underway in the oPt.

Neither the occupation, nor its impact, is static of course. Coping mechanisms are increasingly depleted. The worst impacts are felt by those most vulnerable – children, single mothers, the elderly and disabled. And humanitarians themselves face increasing obstacles in their efforts to mitigate the impacts of occupation, whether it be in increased movement restrictions, the exhaustion of legal processes, the confiscation of our aid, or understandable donor fatigue. As each year passes, the situation deteriorates inexorably, with profound consequences for Palestinians and potentially Israelis as well.

From a humanitarian's perspective, 50 years of occupation represents a gross failure of leadership by many – local and international, Israeli and Palestinian. Too many innocent civilians – Palestinian and Israeli alike – are paying for this abject failure to address the underlying causes of the world's longest-running protection crisis.

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