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Dear Esteemed Civil Society Representatives *,

Thank you for your letter of 6 August 2014, and for your tireless efforts to protect and promote the human rights of the Palestinian people, including through raising your voices at the international level at this desperate time for Palestine.

On a personal level, as well as in my role as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, I remain deeply troubled by the intolerable human cost this conflict is exacting.

I would like to assure you of two things. Firstly, that I am committed to the notion that no single individual or single people can legitimately be denied their human rights. The recent escalation of violence in Gaza is a human tragedy, and I am horrified at the fact that the lives of more than 1,400 civilians have been taken. As a father myself, it is heartbreaking that more than 450 of this number were children.

I remain extremely concerned at the mounting evidence of grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Gaza over the past month. I am also cognizant of the troubling events in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which in recent times, have been overshadowed by Gaza, but which are also critical to address.

The second point I would like to stress is that, since I took up my mandate on 2 June 2014, I have been working steadily towards undertaking a mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory at the very earliest opportunity. Indeed, I indicated to the relevant authorities my willingness to conduct such a mission as soon as I took up my mandate. Since then, I have exerted all efforts to overcome the challenges of gaining access.

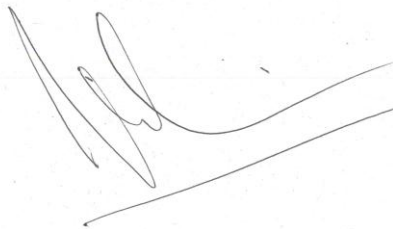
From my own perspective, it is imperative to my ability to effectively carry out this mandate that I see, at first-hand, the daily realities of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and that I am able to meet, face to face, with the people of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and of the Gaza Strip to listen to their concerns and testimonies. Taking a long-term perspective, my priority in these early months has been to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Due to the high importance I attribute to such a visit, I have chosen, in this initial stage of my mandate, to pursue quiet diplomacy over a more public and visible approach, and have raised concerns regarding human rights violations with the relevant authorities in bilateral meetings and in correspondence.

As you are aware, at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on 23 July 2014, I took the opportunity to convey the joint dismay of the collective of United Nations independent human rights experts at the death and devastation resulting from renewed hostilities between Israel, and Hamas, and armed Palestinian groups in Gaza.

Due to the fact that it has, thus far, not been possible to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory, my first report to the General Assembly is largely technical with the exception of some words on Gaza, which I felt compelled to include given the gravity of the situation. In this report, I make it clear that I intend to submit my first substantive report to the Human Rights Council in March 2015, following a mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

I thank you for frankly raising your concerns and for your support. I sincerely wish that I will be able to visit many of your organisations and to meet each of you personally in the near future.

With my sincere regards,



Makarim Wibisono

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the
Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

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