

46th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Item 7 – Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Joint Oral Intervention

Date: 18 March 2021

Speaker: Ms. Elizabeth Rghebi, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Civil society calls on OHCHR to provide a clear timeline for the publication of the 2021 update of the UN database

Madam President,

Due to pervasive impunity, Israel's illegal settlement enterprise continues to expand while Palestinians are forcibly displaced and transferred, with the support of private actors including business enterprises - all in violation of international law. The annual update of the database, as mandated by HRC 31/36, is essential to deter business engagement with Israel's illegal settlement enterprise, which constitutes a grave breach under international humanitarian law and a war crime under the Rome Statute.

Our organizations urge the OHCHR to increase transparency regarding the annual update process for the database and to provide a clear timeline for the publication of the 2021 update. It is important that the annual update is comprehensive by adding all businesses with activities and relationships with Israel's settlement enterprise.

While the world is facing the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel has escalated its illegal demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, hitting a four-year high.¹ House demolitions form part of an institutionalized Israeli policy facilitating the expansion of settlements and *de facto* annexation. Demolitions have been carried out using equipment provided by companies, among others, JCB and Hyundai.

Between March 2020 and January 2021, Israel has demolished 619 structures, including 262 residential structures, 211 of which were inhabited, resulting in the displacement of 1058 Palestinians, including 524² children.

¹ See B'Tselem, "In pandemic, of all times: Number of Palestinians Israel has left homeless hits four-year record," 4 November 2020, available at:

https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20201104_number_of_palestinians_israel_left_homeless_hits_four_year_record_in_pandemic.

² Figures provided by Al-Haq's Monitoring and Documentation Department covering the period from 5 March 2020 until 1 January 2021.

<https://www.alhaq.org/attachments/uploads/download/2021/01/25/210125-joint-urgent-appeal-on-israels-continued-demolitions-amidst-a-global-pandemic-25-01-2021-1611570818.pdf>

At the same time, Israel continues to accelerate the expansion of illegal settlements, housing units, and associated infrastructure including transportation, in which Israeli and multinational companies such as the Basque CAF have evidently been involved.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967 raised concerns that in the first report of the database “a number of companies with important supply relationships with the settlements and/or the occupation were not included”³.

Indeed, businesses continue to play a critical role in sustaining Israel’s illegal settlements and are contributing to and benefiting from Israel’s persistent and systemic violations against the Palestinian people.

We call on Member States to:

1. Support the OHCHR in fulfilling its mandate in its entirety to annually update the UN database and ensure the allocation of the required financial resources.
2. Issue clear guidelines and advisories to private actors and business enterprises - in line with international law - surrounding risks and legal repercussions of involvement in serious violations of international law should they be involved with Israel’s settlement enterprise.
3. Take the necessary measures to ensure that business enterprises listed in the database and located within their territory and/or jurisdiction respect international law.

Thank you.

Joining organisations:

1. 11.11.11
2. Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
3. Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights
4. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man
5. Alternative Refugee Center
6. Association Belgo-Palestinienne WB
7. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS)
8. Broederlijk Delen
9. Bytes For All, Pakistan
10. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
11. CIDSE
12. CIG. CONFEDERACIÓN INTERSINDICAL GALEGA
13. CNCD-11.11.11
14. Comhlámh Justice 4 Palestine
15. Community Action Center, Al-Quds University
16. Entraide et Fraternité
17. European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP)

³ Report A/75/532 of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (22 October 2020), <https://undocs.org/A/75/532>

18. European Legal Support Center
19. European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine (ETUN)
20. Finnish-Arab Friendship Society
21. Human Rights & Democracy Media Center “SHAMS”
22. International Accountability Project
23. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
24. Just Peace Advocates/Mouvement Pour Une Paix Juste, Canada
25. La Alianza Global Jus Semper
26. Le Réseau Syndical International de Solidarité et de Luttés
27. Niagara Movement for Justice in Palestine-Israel
28. Norwegian People's Aid
29. NOVACT - International Institute for Nonviolent Action
30. Palestina solidariteit
31. Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR)
32. Plateforme des ONG françaises pour la Palestine
33. Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS)
34. Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS)
35. Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network
36. SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations)
37. Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ
38. The civic coalition for Palestinian rights
39. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy- MIFTAH
40. Trócaire
41. Union syndicale Solidaires
42. Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)