

Israel-based human rights and civil society organizations call on the UN Security Council to act against
the illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

17th February 2023

To the Members of the United Nations Security Council,

We, a group of Israel-based human rights and civil society organizations, are highly alarmed by the recent decision of our government to expand the illegal settlement project in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) by retroactively approving ten settler outposts and advancing nearly 10,000 new settlement housing units. At this moment, we turn to the UN Security Council, as a guardian of international law, to address this injustice and uphold the global rules-based order.

As you are aware, the new Israeli government is the most far-right, ultra-nationalist government Israel has ever had. By stating in its *Guiding Principles* the intention to “promote and develop settlements in all parts of the Land of Israel”, the government has made it crystal-clear that it is openly pursuing a policy of annexation in the West Bank.

Since 1967, consecutive Israeli governments have illegally transferred its Jewish citizens to the OPT with few tangible consequences from the international community. As a result, today over 675,000 Israelis reside in the settlements, enjoying rights that are vastly superior to those of the occupied Palestinian population. After only two months of the new government in power, this programme is being accelerated with steps to normalize the status of settlements by bringing them under the authority of civilian Israeli ministries.

Israeli settlements are not only illegal under international law, they are the primary cause of systemic and large-scale human rights abuses committed against Palestinians in the OPT. Palestinian land is seized in order to establish and develop settlements. Palestinian freedom of movement and access is blocked by the strategic location of the settlements between and around Palestinian communities, whose territorial contiguity is consequently broken. And families and whole villages are threatened with forcible transfer to make way for settlement housing and infrastructure.

These actions are carried out by the Israeli government to promote the settlement project, thereby creating facts on the ground at the expense of the occupied Palestinian population and advancing de facto annexation of the West Bank. With additional settlements now being added to the map of the OPT, the new government is moving closer to its goal of eradicating the prospect of a Palestinian state.

Members of the Security Council, as the principal organ of the UN charged with ensuring international peace and security, we urge you to take up your responsibility and confront Israel’s annexationist policies which go against the international prohibition on acquisition of territory by force. Given the urgency of the situation, it is time to end inaction and demand the withdrawal of the ongoing settlement project in the West Bank. Only by upholding international law in the region will it be possible to take steps towards achieving self-determination, equality, and peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Signed,

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