



Prof. Richard Falk  
UN Special Rapporteur  
OHCHR-UNOG  
8-14 Avenue de la Paix  
1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

Dear Prof. Richard Falk,

**Subject: Ongoing Forced Internal Displacement in the OPT**

It is unfortunate and regrettable that you were denied the entry to Israel/OPT this week. We hope you will still be able to carry out your mandate and responsibilities successfully.

Badil Resource Center, wishes to draw your attention to the forced internal displacement of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). We would like to inform you of the scope and the root causes of this problem, and call upon your assistance and support to address what is a clearly a state policy of forced internal displacement by the Israel Occupying Power.

1. As a continuation of Israel's discriminatory policies and practices towards its Palestinian citizens, forcible internal displacement in the OPT has accelerated in recent years. **More than 115,000 Palestinians are estimated to have been internally displaced during the last four decades of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory.**<sup>1</sup> In the Gaza Strip, Israeli military operations caused the temporary forced displacement of over 50,000 between 2000 and 2004 alone.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Palestinian population at imminent risk of forcible displacement live in occupied East Jerusalem, where **the State of Israel segregates and discriminates against Palestinians in the guise of development planning.**<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in rural areas of the West Bank (Area C), mainly in the closed areas between the Wall and the Green Line, in enclaves east of the Wall, in western Bethlehem, the Jordan Valley and south of Hebron. Also at risk are the Palestinian population in center of the town of Hebron (H2) and the buffer zone in the Gaza Strip.

3. The continued forced displacement and dispossession are a result of, *inter alia*, the following measures:

a. **Home Demolition** – Israel has demolished almost 19,000 Palestinian houses in the OPT between 1967 and 2007. Between January and June 2008, 245 Palestinian structures were demolished by Israeli authorities, while 112 of these were residential and led to the displacement of 715 Palestinians, including an estimated 368 children.<sup>4</sup> Between January 2000 and September 2007, more than 1,600 Palestinian buildings were demolished in Area C,

1 BADIL Resource Center, Survey 2006-2007.

2 Human Rights Watch, Razing Rafah: Mass House Demolitions in the Gaza Strip, October 2004.

3 The Outline Plan Jerusalem 2000 (2004, 2006) outlines measures, including special segregation, in order to preserve a 70:30 percent ratio of Jewish vs. Palestinian population (the so-called "demographic balance") in line with previous government decisions. See the UPR Submissions of Civic Coalition to Defend Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCDPRJ) and al-Haq for more details on Israel's policies and practices in occupied East Jerusalem (July 2008).

4 Save the Children, Child Rights Fact Sheet, October 2008.



whereas over 3,000 houses are at risk of demolition.<sup>5</sup> In Gaza Strip, over 4,000 houses were demolished between 2000 and 2004.<sup>6</sup>

b. Land Confiscation and Colonization – Israel occupies the entire surface of the West Bank (some 5,860 km<sup>2</sup>) and has confiscated or *de facto* annexed more than 3,350 km<sup>2</sup> for the exclusive benefit of its Jewish population.<sup>7</sup> The lands confiscated from Palestinians are turned over to the use of Jewish settlers and to building and expanding the Jewish-only colonies (settlements) and related infrastructure. Since Annapolis Summit, Israeli tenders and plans announced for construction in the OPT amount to almost 30,000 Jewish-only housing units.<sup>8</sup> By March 2008, constructions were under way in over 100 colonies and 58 “outposts”, including 16 new outposts/settlements. In occupied East Jerusalem alone, new plans and tenders have been announced for construction of almost 14,000 housing units since December 2007.<sup>9</sup>

c. The Closure Regime including the Wall and its Associated Regime – There is also a clear evidence of internal displacement as a result of lack of access to essential services because of the ‘closure regime’, which is making the situation of Palestinians, especially those in enclaves, untenable. Freedom of movement is systematically denied through an elaborate regime of Israeli military checkpoints and obstacles (678 as of 12 April 2008), bypass roads and infrastructure dividing the OPT.

d. Violence and Harassment by Jewish Settlers – internal displacement of Palestinians is also a result of the harassment and attacks by the Jewish settlers who prevent Palestinians from accessing their land. In 2006, over 275 incidents of settler violence were recorded, ranging from uprooting trees to seizing land and shooting children. The Israeli authorities have failed to protect Palestinian residents and enforce the law against the settlers.<sup>10</sup>

16. The severity and consistency of the forcible internal displacement of Palestinians by the State of Israel amounts to a **policy of population transfer for the purpose of acquiring land and altering the demographic composition of the territory under Israel’s control.**

17. Israel's belligerent occupation has become a system of institutionalized racial discrimination employed in order to assert control over the maximum amount of land with a minimum number of indigenous Palestinians, and to subsequently build and expand Jewish-only colonies on these lands.

18. Thus, **occupation, colonization and institutionalized racism and discrimination on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity and religion are root causes of the ongoing forcible internal displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people.**

19. Forced displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in the OPT have been ignored by the

5 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Lack of Permit” Demolitions and Resultant Displacement in Area C, May 2008.

6 Human Rights Watch, Razing Rafah: Mass House Demolitions in the Gaza Strip, October 2004.

7 BADIL Resource Center, Survey 2006-2007.

8 Applied Research Institute -Jerusalem (ARIJ), Press Release, 18 July 2008.

9 Ibid. In March 2008 it was reported that tenders for 745 housing units and plans for over 3,600 housing units since December 2007. Peace Now, “The Death of the Settlement Freeze – 4 Months since Annapolis”, March 2008

10 The temporary success of Jewish settlers to ethnically cleanse the small village of Yanoun, near Nablus, in 2002 is an example of the impunity that these settlers enjoy. See also: BADIL Resource Center, Survey 2006-2007.



international community, including the UN. So far, the *ad hoc* and limited international response has failed to prevent and effectively respond to the ongoing forcible internal displacement of Palestinians.

In light of these concerns, we wish to call upon you and your office to address the question of forcible displacement in the OPT and respectfully ask you to urge the UNHRC to:

1. Scrutinize Israel's polices and practices of forced displacement and dispossession of Palestinians which render the two-state solution to the protracted conflict unfeasible.
2. Address Israel's regime of institutionalized racial discrimination which is a root cause of the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians the OPT.
3. Call upon States to undertake effective measures, including boycotts, divestment and sanctions, which can bring Israel into compliance with its obligations under international law to:
  - a. End its military occupation.
  - b. Revoke and annul its discriminatory laws, policies and practices against the Palestinians.
  - c. Ensure just and effective reparation of the Palestinian victims; (including return, restitution, compensation and rehabilitation)

Should you have any questions or require further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

Reem Mazzawi  
Legal Advocacy Coordinator