
STATEMENT BY UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT ON SIXTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE PALESTINIAN NAKBA

16 May 2011

GENEVA – The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Mr. Richard Falk, marks the sixty-third anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophic beginning of the Palestinian tragedy of dispossession and occupation, with the following statement:

"I commemorate Nakba this year dismayed by the killing of demonstrators observing the day in the occupied Palestinian territory and elsewhere in the region.

Since the Nakba on 15 May 1948 Israel has continuously confiscated Palestinian land in order to build illegal settlements and populate them with Israeli citizens. It is astonishing that no one in the international community has stepped forward, after 63 years, to coerce Israel to comply with international law. Israel's legacy of ethnic cleansing persists, and manifests itself in an array of challenges to the security of residency for Palestinians living under occupation.

The construction of the Wall inside the West Bank results in an additional 12% of land confiscation and demolition of Palestinian homes, in flagrant defiance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

This past week seven Palestinian families in the West Bank village of al-Walaja received demolition orders. This is a reminder that the Nakba continues. Israel's pursuit of what it calls 'facts on the ground' consistently forces Palestinians to abandon their homes, lands, and lives, creating a reality better understood as virtual annexation.

This is a particularly notable Nakba anniversary, as it coincides with the release of information confirming that Israel secretly revoked as many as 140,000 residency permits of Palestinians between 1967 and 1994. This is not only another violation of Israel's obligations as the Occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is also a glaring example of several sinister schemes that Israel has employed over the years to rid historic Palestine of its original inhabitants, in order to make space for Israeli citizens.

The international community needs to take urgent action to compel Israel to end its confiscation and occupation of Palestinian land."

In 2008, the UN Human Rights Council designated Richard Falk (United States of America) as the fifth Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights on Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. The mandate was originally established in 1993 by the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/countries/ps/mandate/index.htm>

OHCHR Country Page – Occupied Palestinian Territories: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/MENARegion/Pages/PSIndex.aspx>

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