
UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT SAYS ISRAEL MUST STOP DEMOLITIONS IN THE WEST BANK

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GENEVA – UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Richard Falk, has called on Israeli authorities to stop illegally demolishing Palestinian homes in the West Bank, as they are about to forcibly displace 15 families, consisting of 150 Palestinians – including children, by demolishing two apartment buildings in Beit Hanina, East Jerusalem.

"This pattern of eviction, demolition, expansion of settlements, and settlers' violent expropriation of Palestinian homes in the occupied East Jerusalem violates fundamental human rights, as well as provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing belligerent occupation," Mr. Falk said describing the development as "particularly disturbing."

Noting that on Sunday, 6 March 2011, the families were given only 10 days to vacate their homes, the Special Rapporteur said that Israeli authorities often seek to justify demolition of Palestinian homes on the grounds that the owners lack building permits, which are next to impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

"Beyond the immediate dire consequences to individuals and families facing the loss of their homes," the human rights expert said, "such acts form part of the broader picture of annexation, not as an Israeli legal claim but enacted increasingly as evidence of an Israeli political project."

Since the beginning of 2011, Israeli authorities have demolished 96 Palestinian structures throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, consisting of 32 homes and other residential structures. As a result, 175 people, more than half of them children, have lost their homes – a sharp increase compared to the same period in 2010 (56 demolitions and 129 people displaced). At the same time, Israeli settlements in the West Bank have continued to expand.

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>

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