
ISRAEL MUST AVOID FURTHER VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW IN EAST JERUSALEM, SAYS UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT
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GENEVA – United Nations Special Rapporteur Richard Falk has urged Israel to prevent further violations of international law in East Jerusalem, most urgently in relation to the situation of four Palestinians threatened with the loss of their right of residence and the Mayor of Jerusalem's plan to demolish 22 buildings, representing 89 Palestinian homes, in the Silwan area of East Jerusalem.

"These actions, if carried out, would violate international law, with certain actions potentially amounting to war crimes under international humanitarian law," warned the independent expert designated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to monitor the situation of human rights in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

"It is disturbing that Israel is considering revoking the residency permits of Muhammad Abu-Teir, Ahmad Attoun, Muhammad Totah, and Khaled Abu Arafah, all current or former members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and long-time residents of East Jerusalem, especially since the Israeli High Court of Justice is scheduled to consider their case on 6 September," the Special Rapporteur noted.

"What is particularly shocking is that Israel appears ready to forcibly transfer these individuals based on their supposed lack of loyalty to the State of Israel," Mr. Falk said. "Israel, as an occupying Power, is prohibited from transferring civilian persons from East Jerusalem, and is prohibited from forcing Palestinians to swear allegiance or otherwise affirm their loyalty to the State of Israel."

The United Nations independent expert warned that population transfers in or from occupied territory are war crimes under both the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and customary international law. "Those responsible could be liable for war crimes for forcibly transferring these persons, as well as for violations of a wide range of international human rights, rights that protect the family and family life, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, non-discrimination, and political participation."

"Forcibly transferring these individuals would constitute serious violations of Israel's legal obligations. At the same time, the current threats should be viewed as part of a larger, extremely worrying pattern of Israeli efforts to drive Palestinians out of East Jerusalem – all of which are illegal under international law," stated the Special Rapporteur.

The situation in the Silwan area of East Jerusalem warrants urgent action by the Government of Israel, in order to prevent the occurrence of serious violations of international law, according to the Special Rapporteur. "East Jerusalem is occupied territory under international law," he recalled. "International law does not allow Israel to bulldoze Palestinian homes to make space for the Mayor's project to build a garden, or anything else."

"This situation should be seen within the context of Israel's persistent, systematic approach to driving Palestinians out of East Jerusalem," Mr. Falk added, "including by denying them permission to construct homes, declaring their homes illegal, forcibly removing families, and then destroying their homes – all to make way for Israeli settlements."

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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For more information and media requests, please contact Kevin Turner (Tel.: + 41 22 928 9603 / email: kturner@ohchr.org) or write to sropt@ohchr.org.

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