



## General Assembly GA/PAL/1142

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### **ISRAEL'S VIOLATIONS RISK UNDERMINING INTERNATIONAL LEGAL SYSTEM, WARNS**

#### **STATEMENT ADOPTED BY BUREAU OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

Following is the statement by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on Israel's settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem:

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expresses its utmost concern about the continuing illegal settlement activities being carried out by the Government of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The situation with regard to settlement construction is deeply alarming and requires immediate attention.

The announcement by Prime Minister Netanyahu on 25 November of a 10-month suspension of construction in settlements in the West Bank was immediately followed by reports of approved construction of tens of new settlement units, casting great doubt on the seriousness of the Government's intention. Indeed, according to the Israeli organization Peace Now, 3,492 housing units in settlements are cleared for construction during the announced suspension period. Furthermore, on 13 December, the Israeli Cabinet voted to approve a proposal to include settlements in the list of communities designated as "national priority zones", giving them access to credits worth \$41 million. Such Government subsidies and incentives to illegal settlements and settlers only contribute to the continued growth and entrenchment of the settlements, thereby prejudging the outcome of the permanent status negotiations on this critical issue.

Israel's temporary suspension falls far short of its obligations under the Road Map, namely to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, and to immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001. The world community clearly considers Israel's settlement activities as illegal under international law and is of the view that the unconditional cessation of all settlement activities is a crucial condition for the resumption of serious negotiations between the parties on all permanent status issues leading to a two-State solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There clearly can be no progress made towards a solution, including with regard to the borders of the future State of Palestine, while settlement construction continues. The Bureau of the Committee thus fully supports the position of the Palestinian leadership that a resumption of a political dialogue would be meaningless in the face of continued settlement activity.

The announcement of a temporary and partial halt in settlement construction has been further exposed and undercut by the explicit exclusion of Occupied East Jerusalem, where Israeli colonization measures have been most intense. As recently as 17 November, the "Jerusalem municipal planning committee" reportedly approved the construction of 900 new housing units in the "Gilo" settlement. Evictions of Palestinian residents, house demolitions, and other discriminatory measures against the Palestinian population also continued to be carried out by Israeli authorities, ignoring the calls of the international community, including the Quartet, on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. The Bureau of the Committee would like to remind Israel that, as the Occupying Power, it is fully bound by the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Article 49 of the Convention clearly stipulates that, "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies".

The wave of recent settler-related violent incidents and provocations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has also been a matter of great concern to the Bureau of the Committee. There are almost daily reports of attacks against Palestinian civilians perpetrated by extremist settlers and settler groups, who are often armed and acting with complete impunity under the protection of Israeli forces. Settlers have been involved in shooting at Palestinian civilians, damaging their property, vandalizing places of worship, uprooting trees, burning farmland and destroying harvests. They intimidate, harass and physically assault Palestinian men, women and children. Last week's burning of a mosque in the village of Yasuf, north-east of Salfit, is just another vivid example of settler crimes. The lack of adequate Israeli law enforcement, bordering on permissiveness, when it comes to settler violence, is fuelling tensions and could lead to another escalation of the conflict.

The Committee calls on the international community to take urgent and decisive action against the continued illegal Israeli actions. Israel's violation of international law goes far beyond the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and may affect conflict situations in other parts of the world by discrediting, disregarding and seriously undermining the existing international legal system. The Committee reiterates its call on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take, individually or collectively, the measures they deem appropriate to ensure respect for the Convention, including through the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to address the issue of respect and ensuring respect for the Convention in all circumstances, including with regard to the illegal Israeli settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

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