

Oral Statement in the General Debate of the United Nations Human Rights Council, 31st Regular Session, Agenda Item 7

Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Council,

Over the last six months, Palestinians experienced an escalation in unlawful policies being implemented as part of a 48-year-long Israeli occupation. Civil society organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have expressed particular alarm at the excessive use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinians alleged to have conducted attacks against Israelis. Many reported incidents suggest that a "shoot to kill" policy is being implemented by Israeli forces, in contravention to both international humanitarian and human rights law.

Since the beginning of 2016, we have also witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of demolitions and confiscations by Israeli forces of Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank, including the destruction of donor-funded items delivered as humanitarian aid. As a result, over 480 Palestinians have been displaced and many more have lost structures essential to their livelihoods.¹ Both destruction and confiscation of private property are prohibited under international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

House demolitions have also been increasingly used as a punitive measure against alleged Palestinian attackers as a form of collective punishment, which is strictly prohibited under international law. Punitive revocation of Jerusalem residency has also been used as a form of collective punishment.

We also want to raise our concern for the alarming increase in serious threats directed against members of civil society organizations in Palestine and Israel in the past few months.

Mr. President,

Excessive use of force, collective punishment, forcible displacement and the simultaneous expansion of settlements and related infrastructure - these are all a manifestations of systematic Israeli policies that aim at an overall dispossession of Palestinians and the consequent establishment of *permanent* control over territories occupied since 1967.

It is clear that the continuation of these policies on the ground fundamentally undermines the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and gravely compromises any effort towards future negotiations among the parties to the conflict.

Therefore we call on Member States to abide by their obligations to respect and ensure respect for international law in order to bring these violations to an end. This should include supporting initiatives to cease trade with settlements and entities that support the settlements and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of violations of international law.

¹ Press release of the Humanitarian Coordinator, 17 February 2016.