

## **Palestine: Accountability Must Be Ensured Following US Announcement that Israeli Settlements Not in Violation of International Law**

November 26, 2019

We, a group of Palestinian and regional organizations, condemn the recent [announcement](#) by United States (US) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, on 18 November 2019, declaring that “[t]he establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law.” We are gravely concerned about the current US administration’s policies, which significantly threaten the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination, justice, and equality. This attempt to normalize Israel’s policies and practices that clearly violate international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) – the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza – as well as the occupied Syrian Golan must be rejected.

A lack of action on the part of the international community has allowed these violations to continue. We, therefore, call on the international community to ensure accountability with the aim of ending the perpetuity and profitability of Israel’s illegal settlement enterprise and the occupation, including an international agreement for a complete ban on all products and services from the illegal Israeli settlements in the international market. We also urge UN member states to protect the independence and impartiality of the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights by supporting the immediate publication of the database of all businesses engaged in listed activities related to Israel’s unlawful settlement enterprise in the OPT, with company names and annual updates, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

Furthermore, we call on the international community to take measures, including countermeasures and sanctions, to ensure Israel and other relevant parties respect their obligations under international law to end the occupation and ensure full accountability for Israeli political and military officials who are responsible for grave breaches of international law in the OPT through the International Criminal Court (ICC) and universal jurisdiction.

Israeli settlements directly violate international law and amount to a war crime under the [Fourth Geneva Convention](#), which states that “[t]he Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” Israel’s illegal settlement enterprise systematically denies Palestinians access to their land and natural wealth and resources through its discriminatory zoning and planning regimes for the benefit of the Israeli settler population, creates a coercive environment, and results in unlawful removal of the indigenous Palestinian population. Population transfer may further amount to a crime against humanity when part of a widespread or systematic practice constitutive of a State policy.

The US administration's disregard for international law will have wide ranging, harmful ramifications for human rights, threatening the stability of the region and the progress that has been made in the development of international law and a rules-based international order.

This move has already emboldened Israel in its annexation attempts. On 19 November 2019, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin [Netanyahu](#) approved the advancement of a bill that would have Israel apply sovereignty to the Jordan Valley. Such a move denies the Palestinian people the right to self-determination and renders an independent Palestinian state unviable. We call on the international community to heed the warning of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, [Michael Lynk](#), that “[t]his will only confirm a one-state reality characterized by a rigid two-tier system of legal and political rights, based on ethnicity and religion. This would meet the international definition of apartheid.”

This announcement by the US is only the latest in a long line of policies by the current US administration that undermine the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. President Donald Trump has recognized [Jerusalem](#) as the capital of Israel and Israel's annexation of the occupied [Syrian Golan](#), in violation of international law. The US has also cut crucial funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) for Palestinian refugees, eliminated [USAID programs](#) in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, closed the [Washington office](#) of the General Delegation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and proposed the so-called “[Deal of the Century](#)” prejudices the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and seems likely to imperil their legitimate aspirations for freedom, justice, and an independence.

#### **Signatory Organizations:**

1. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man
2. Association ADALA (Pour le Droit à un Procès équitable) - Morocco
3. Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights
4. Bahrain Center for Human Rights
5. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
6. Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center
7. Mwatana for Human Rights - Yemen
8. Palestinian Center for Human Rights
9. Palestinian Human Rights Organization
10. SCM | Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
11. Sudanese Monitor for Human Rights
12. Syrian Network for Human Rights
13. Syrians for Truth and Justice -STJ