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Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 February 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Human rights situation in OPT

Preamble

Over the past years, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, based in Egypt, has been following and monitoring violations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people. Monitoring reports showed that violation rates are consistently rising year after the other, as the occupation forces and their settlers continued their grave and systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In this context, this intervention comes to address a range of violations, including killing and targeting of civilians, restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on freedom of movement, as well as house demolitions and Israeli settlement expansion.

Targeting and killing civilians

Since their start on March 30, 2018, the marches of return in Gaza have signaled a new course of targeting more civilians. Although these marches remained peaceful, the occupation forces have responded with lethal force and targeting civilians, including children and women, leading to the death of 215 people, including 47 children, two women, and 9 persons with disabilities, along with 4 medical workers and journalists. Nearly 19,226 people, including 5,001 children, 867 women and 766 paramedics working in the health sector, were injured. 128 journalists were also reportedly injured while covering the Great March of Return protests, and incidences of amputation, in general, reached 158 cases, since the beginning of the marches on March 30, 2018 until December 31, 2019.

Regardless of March of Return, targeting civilians continued to occur. In November 2019, the occupation forces launched a series of military operations in the Gaza Strip, killing 34 civilians, including 8 children and 3 women, in addition to wounding 109 others, including 51 children and 11 women.

Restrictions on freedom of movement

The ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip imposed by Israel entered its 13th year in a row, imposing strict movement restrictions on the Gaza Strip, and refusing to allow most of its residents to leave or return to it. Throughout 2019, the occupation authorities hampered the travel of 7,794 out of 22,144 patients from the Gaza Strip, whom were referred to receive treatment in Israeli or West Bank hospitals. Representing 35.1% of the total applications submitted. The occupation authorities attributed the refusal of providing access to treatment to 1,920 patients for security reasons. It also did not respond to 1,186 requests, delayed response to 3,563 patients, while asking 98 patients to change their companions, and delayed the travel of 1,027 patient, under various pretexts.

The occupation authorities also continued to prevent the supply of hundreds of commodities and basic materials which can be understood as 'dual-use' goods, leading to further deterioration in the economic, health, educational, and infrastructure conditions. It also continued to ban the export of products in the Gaza Strip, excluding very limited quantities of agricultural products, not exceeding 3% of the monthly export rate before the imposition of the blockade.

The policies of the Israeli authorities did not stop at allegations of security reasons, but put other obstacles in order to slow down and complicate traveling procedures. As the agencies affiliated with the Ministry of Interior in the Occupied Palestinian Territories seized an estimated 30 million euro worth of "biometric" passport that the Civil Aviation Organization "ICAO" requested the Palestinian authority to apply, in order to facilitate the movement of travellers, especially in light of the obstacles the Palestinian citizens face while traveling as a result of the security restrictions imposed on them under the pretext of terrorism. These new passports would have lifted these obstacles off the shoulders of the Palestinians.

Houses demolitions and settlement expansion

2019 witnessed an unprecedented growth in the policy of house demolitions by the security authorities in Israel, both in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank, where 617 buildings were demolished, in Tubas, Nablus and Jericho in the West Bank, under the pretext of not obtaining building permits. Homeowners, on the other hand, claim that they face obstacles and complications that prevent them from obtaining these permits. The demolition process resulted in the displacement of 998 Palestinians.

In occupied Jerusalem, the occupation authorities demolished a total of 265 buildings, including 169 housing units. It is an unprecedented number, as 13 of the owners of the demolished houses were forced to demolish their homes at their own expenses, and the rest were demolished by Jerusalem municipality.

On October 22, 2019, the Jerusalem municipality forced Sultan Bashir, from the village of Jabal Al-Mukaber, south of occupied Jerusalem, to demolish his house on the grounds that it wasn't licensed otherwise he will be fined. The house was inhabited by the Bashir family, most of whom were children who became homeless after the demolition.

In January 2020, the Israeli police and the Jerusalem municipality forced the two Jerusalemites, Musa Bashir and Ammar Nassar, from the same village, to demolish their homes with their hands, for fear of imposing heavy fines on them by the occupation authorities.

The demolition policy of the Jerusalem municipality, with the assistance of the Israeli security services, expresses the Israeli tendency to replace the areas belonging to the Palestinian citizens with new settlements and to approve a demographic change in favor of settlers in Jerusalem instead of the Palestinians, in a flagrant challenge to UN Resolution No. 2334 of December 23, 2016 concerning the termination of settlement policies in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the illegality of Israel's establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

Maat affirms that the presence of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories violates the international humanitarian law, and is considered a war crime, as this "settlement project" depends upon unlawfully seizing Palestinian resources, including land, water, and minerals, in addition to exporting hundreds of millions of dollars of settlement products to many countries.

Recommendations

- The need for exerting pressure on the occupation authorities to immediately stop the violations committed against the Palestinians, from targeting and killing civilians, suppressing peaceful marches and gatherings, and holding those responsible for these crimes accountable.
- To stop the policy of imposing strict restrictions on the right of the Palestinians to move, especially with regard to patients who are referred abroad for medical treatment, which prevents them from traveling and receiving treatment.
- To exert pressure on the occupation authorities to stop demolishing buildings and expanding the establishment of settlement, and not to allow the identity of Jerusalem to change. With the need to stop supporting the economy that helps these illegal settlements continue to grow and expand.
- Create a unified and uncomplicated system for issuing licenses so that Palestinians can build homes legally, and not use the illegality of building homes to demolish them again.