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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, 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.

[5 February 2023]

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



Israel's E1 Settlement Plan: A New Nakba In the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Israeli occupation government is making every possible effort to advance its widely-condemned settlement plans across the occupied Palestinian territories, including, but not limited to, the controversial E1 project, which was first approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government in 2012 and then put on hold for roughly eight years amid significant international pushback.¹

Israel's efforts to materialize its E1 project on the ground has had significant repercussions for the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Building settlement units in E1 narrows down the already thin corridor that links the northern and southern West Bank and will hamper the establishment of a Palestinian State with territorial contiguity.²

As part of this project, Jerusalem will be enclaved from the east and connected with the Israeli neighborhoods built north of the Old City. There is, therefore, a deep concern that Palestinian landowners will not be able to access and farm their lands.

At the same time, the execution of the plan also jeopardizes the Bedouin communities in the area, whose access to grazing lands will be blocked. In any case, the Israeli Civil Administration is already planning expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the members of these communities.

E1 plan will also stir tension as the access roads currently used by Palestinians will become thoroughfares for settlers occupying the formers' lands. Palestinians' freedom of movement will be significantly affected.

As part of the project, the settlement units would be built east of the illegal Ma'ale Adumim settlement at the heart of the occupied West Bank, breaking up the bond that connects Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The destruction of Khan AlAhmar Bedouin community falls in line with this plan. The erasure of Bedouin agricultural and residential structures matches Israeli intents to forcibly transfer and ethnically cleanse these communities, a move which is being orchestrated militarily to make E1 scheme come true. To implement the E-1 plan, Israel is destroying these Bedouin Palestinian villages and removing Palestinian communities to transfer in Israeli settlers into the area, and, ultimately fully annex the territory to Israel.³

The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, among several human rights watchdogs, have documented the destruction of dozens of structures, including houses, animal sheds, and schools, forcing the displacement of hundreds of Palestinians, including children.

Driven by military order 1797, Israel is obviously opting for a State policy to evacuate the community, engaging all state institutions, including its highest Court, to that end.

The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) is deeply concerned about the dangerous consequences of such a settlement project, considered, by all means, illegal under international law; The destruction of private property in the absence of military necessity is a violation of Article 46 of the Hague Regulations and a war crime prosecutable at the International Criminal Court.

The forcible transfer of the Palestinian population from their lands and the transfer of Israeli settlers amounts to a violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, a war crime and crime against humanity prosecutable at the International Criminal Court.

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." It also prohibits the "individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory".⁴

PRC calls on the international community to urgently step in to pressurize Israel to halt its illegal settlement activity and to comply with their obligations to respect Palestinian humanitarian rights enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israel should abide by its responsibility to protect civilian populations from the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This includes resort to all available mechanisms for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this regard, PRC calls on the Member States of the United Nations Security Council to use all necessary means, to intervene and halt Israel's crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

1 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-puts-e1-settlement-project-back-on-agenda-weeks-ahead-of-biden-trip/>

2 https://www.btselem.org/settlements/20121202_e1_human_rights_ramifications

3 <http://actpalestineforum.org/files/Maale-Adumim-Settlement-and-Khan-El-Ahmar-Village1.pdf>

4 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/>