

Israel Officially Declares Intention to Forcibly Transfer Palestinians in 'E1'

It is with extreme concern that we, the undersigned members of the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council, learned of the recent developments relating to Israeli plans to forcibly transfer Palestinian Bedouin communities currently residing in the central West Bank.

On April 28th, 2015, a representative of the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) visited the village of Abu Nwar, located in what has become known by the international community as the 'E1' area, to inform residents that they were slated for transfer, with 34 families to be transferred to the al Jabal West relocation site, and the remaining families to be transferred to other locations at a later date. It was made clear by the ICA representative, Dov Sedaka, that no members of the community would be permitted by the ICA to remain in the area.

As such, the residents of Abu Nwar – and many other Palestinian Bedouin communities in the central West Bank - have been confronted with an impossible decision: a choice between relocation to cramped urban townships – which would result in devastating cultural, social and economic blows to these traditionally nomadic and pastoral communities; and awaiting forced eviction from an environment which has become characterized by regular house demolitions (including the destruction, confiscation or imposition of stop-work orders by Israel of/in relation to donor-funded shelters and other vital infrastructure), little/no access to electricity and water networks; and the persistent threat of settler harassment and violence. As such, these communities have been entirely deprived of any genuine choice.

Furthermore, these intended relocations represent just the first phase of Israel's colonization of Palestinian land: the planned transfers will, once complete, be followed by a second phase consisting of settlement construction and the positioning/installation of Israeli settlers.

The constituent parts of this process are inherently unlawful under International Humanitarian Law. For instance, the forcible transfer of members of an occupied population by the occupying power is prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as is the transfer by the occupying power of its own citizens into the occupied territory. Furthermore, in its alteration of existing legislation so as to delegitimize the presence of the occupied civilian population and thus facilitate appropriation of this land for the purpose of the Israeli state, Israel has also contravened Article 43 of the same Convention.

In addition, this process also demonstrates a clear and consistent disregard on behalf of Israel for key tenets of International Human Rights Law, including, inter alia, the right to adequate housing (Article 11 of ICESCR) and the right to health (Article 11 & 12 of ICESCR).

It is the repeatedly-stated desire - and inalienable legal right - of the affected Palestinian communities to return to the land of the Naqab desert from which they were originally displaced during the violence of the Nakba in 1948. Until this is realized, however, these communities wish to remain in the villages in which they currently reside, and to enjoy the human rights to which they are entitled under international law.

We, the undersigned, call urgently upon the international community to play a central role in ensuring the protection of these populations, and for third party states to uphold their obligation to ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law by conveying their unequivocal objection to Israeli plans to forcibly transfer Palestinian Bedouin communities in the central West Bank.



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