

Israel approves law to deport Palestinian citizens to Gaza and West Bank



The Dome of the Rock is seen in the background as Israeli forces clash with Palestinian worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound during Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) in the

Israeli-occupied Old City of al-Quds. (Photo by Reuters)

Tel Aviv, February 16 (RHC)-- The Israeli parliament has passed a law that allows the Tel Aviv regime to revoke the residency status or citizenship of those who have been engaged in activism against the occupation of Palestinian lands, and deport them either to the occupied West Bank or the besieged Gaza Strip.

The final reading of the bill was passed in the Knesset by 94 votes to 10 on Wednesday. It was fast-tracked through parliament following an escalation of tensions across West Bank towns and cities in recent months.

The law stipulates that those sentenced to prison, and who have received a form of funding from the Palestinian Authority (PA) can have their citizenship or residency revoked and be deported.

It will apply to Palestinian citizens of Israel and permanent residents of occupied East al-Quds. The latter widely refuse Israeli citizenship and are issued residency IDs by Israel's interior ministry.

According to international law, deportation by an occupying power constitutes a breach of the Geneva Conventions and is considered one of the most serious war crimes. This is while the Israeli threat of deportation of Palestinian prisoners is standard practice.

In 2013, for example, the Israeli regime sought to force hunger striker Samer el-Issawi to accept being deported to a UN member state in return for him ending his strike. According to the Israeli rights group B'tselem, the goal of such deportations is to create a demographic and geographic reality under which Israel's sovereignty in the occupied East al-Quds cannot be challenged.

"This policy blatantly discriminates between Palestinian residents of East al-Quds and Israeli settlers," the rights group said. "Israeli citizens can leave for as long as they like and always have the right to return."

Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right cabinet, discussions about withdrawing residencies and stripping away citizenship from Palestinians living in al-Quds have been floated, specifically for prisoners who have carried out retaliatory operations.

According to human rights organizations, Israel has revoked the residency status of at least 14,701 Palestinians in East al-Quds from 1967 to 2020. The number will jump to 86,000 if the dependent children of those who had their residencies revoked are counted.

Earlier, the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement had denounced the deportation bill as a flagrant violation of Palestinians' rights. "Such a bill is aimed at Judaization of occupied Palestinian lands, and an attempt to displace Palestinian people forcibly," it said in a statement on January 12.

Hamas went on to call upon the Arab and Muslim nations as well as the international community to reject the bill and exert pressure on the occupying Israeli regime to stop the criminal move, which blatantly violates international law and conventions.

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