

UN condemns Israel's mass displacement of Palestinians in West Bank as war crime



United Nations, July 8 (RHC)-- The United Nations has warned that the Israeli regime's forcible mass eviction of approximately 1,200 Palestinians from their homes in the Masafer Yatta area of the occupied West Bank amounts to a "war crime."

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement that "evictions that lead to displacement, if enforced, amount to forced forcible deportation and a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and therefore constitute a war crime."

"The international humanitarian law imposes an absolute prohibition on the forcible transfer of civilians from or within the occupied Palestinian territories, and that Israeli authorities must put an end to all coercive measures, including planned evictions, demolitions, and military training in it," the OCHA said.

The OCHA further said that “constant eviction of Palestinians from their ancestral homes and Israel’s decades-long settlements expansion activities have changed realities on the ground, and are inconsistent with international humanitarian law and UN Security Council resolutions, which are legally binding.”

The statement noted that “215 Palestinian families, comprising 1,150 individuals, including 569 children, are currently living in the Masafer Yatta area and are facing threats of home demolition, as well as violence from settlers who live in outposts close to them.”

Meanwhile, the head of the European Union’s mission to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has also rejected Israel’s forcible eviction of Palestinians from the Masafer Yatta area.

Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff said on Thursday that the Israeli decision to displace the residents of the area was “illegal and contrary to international humanitarian law.” He added, “We are here today to find out the situation, after the decision of an Israeli court to displace the residents of the area.”

“We are following with interest the visit of U.S. President Joe Biden to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and we hope that there will be pressure on Israel to fulfill its obligations to protect civilians,” the EU official stated.

Masafer Yatta spans some 36 kilometers (22 miles) and is comprised of 19 Palestinian villages that are home to more than 2,000 people. The Israeli military designated part of the area a closed military zone for training in the 1980s, and “they have sought to remove the communities on this basis,” according to the United Nations.

On May 4, the Israeli Supreme Court rejected appeals by the residents of Masafer Yatta to prevent their eviction. The court’s ruling effectively ended two decades of legal battles by the residents who had fought to continue living on their land.

Israeli forces have reportedly already demolished structures in the Masafer Yatta communities of Khribet al-Fakhiet and al-Markez.

Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israelis occupy over 250 illegal settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state, with East al-Quds as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014, with Israel’s continued settlement expansion emerging as a key sticking point.

All Israeli settlements are deemed illegal under international law as they are built on the occupied land.

The UN Security Council has time and again condemned the occupying regime’s diabolic settler-colonialism project in its umpteen resolutions.

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