



VIRTUAL MEETING

“Supporting Human Rights Defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Reality, Challenges, and Obligations”

Convened by the
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)

Tuesday, 7 December 2021, 10.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. (NY time)

Bio Notes of Panellists

Mr. Wessam Ahmad is the Director of the Applied Center for International Law of Al-Haq and Coordinator of Al-Haq’s Business and Human Rights Program. He has been working as a human rights advocate with Al-Haq since 2006. His area of research focuses on the economic incentive structure perpetuating the colonization of Palestine along business lines. Mr. Ahmad holds a BA and Juris Doctorate from Louisiana State University and an LLM from the Irish Center for Human Rights in Galway.

Mr. Saleh Higazi is the Head of the Jerusalem Office (Israel/Palestine) at Amnesty International and its MENA Deputy Regional Director. He is also an advisor to the Al-Quds University Human Rights Clinic where he worked as academic coordinator and lecturer. He has also worked as a Public Relations Officer in the Office of the Ministry of Planning in Ramallah. He holds an MA in human rights from the University of Essex and a BA in philosophy and political science from Lawrence University.

Mr. Michael Sfard is an Israeli lawyer and political activist specializing in international human rights law and the laws of war. He has served as counsel in various cases on these topics in Israel. He has represented a variety of Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, movements and activists before the Israeli Supreme Court. He has brought many cases to challenge the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and represented hundreds of Israeli soldiers who have refused to serve in the OPT. Mr. Sfard and his law office provide legal counsel for the Israeli human rights NGO Yesh Din and is a legal counsel for Peace Now. Michael Sfard’s recent legal opinion, commissioned by Yesh Din, concluded that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank is a form of apartheid, constituting a crime according to international law. In 2018, he published “The Wall and the Gate: Israel, Palestine, and the Legal Battle for Human Rights”.

Mr. Omar Shakir is the Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch. He investigates human rights abuses in Israel, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Prior to his current role, he was a Bertha Fellow at the Centre for Constitutional Rights, where he focused on U.S. counterterrorism policies, including legal representation of Guantanamo detainees. A former Fulbright Scholar in Syria, Mr. Shakir holds a JD from Stanford Law School, where he co-authored a report on the civilian consequences of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan as a part of the International Human Rights & Conflict Resolution Clinic. He also holds an MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Affairs, and a BA in International Relations from Stanford.

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