

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

17 September 2024

UN Human Rights Office urges Israel to stop forcible transfer of Palestinian herding communities and ongoing annexation of parts of the West Bank

The UN Human Rights Office condemns ongoing settler attacks and harassment of the community of Al Muarrajat, one of the last two remaining Bedouin communities between Ramallah and Jericho, perpetrated with the apparent complicity of Israeli Security Forces (ISF) and calls on Israel to take urgent steps to prevent their displacement.

On 16 September in the morning, around 15 Israeli settlers attacked the mixed primary school of the Arab Al-Mulaihat in Al-Mu'arajat area and nearby homes for four hours. They assaulted teachers, pupils, and activists present in the village as protective presence with sticks and iron bars. Nine Palestinians were injured during the attack, including three Palestinian women who sustained hairline fractures, four women teachers and a foreign activist. ISF arrived at the scene and, instead of stopping the attack, arrested the school principal and another community member allegedly for injuring one of the attackers.

These assaults are taking place within a concerted attack on the community, calculated to force them to leave their land and homes. Settlers had reportedly poisoned about 130 heads of livestock belonging to Palestinian herders on 12 September, and ISF reportedly arrested three activists providing a protective presence on 15 September, following months of nearly daily settler harassment and intimidation of members of the community, with settlers demanding that they leave.

The attack on Al Muarrajat community follows the recent forcible displacement of other tens of long-standing Bedouin communities from the Jordan Valley. In one example, the Um al Jamal community in the northern Jordan Valley came under incessant settler attack and harassment, and this week, the last remaining family fled. The community now stands empty of Palestinians. The forcible displacement of the remaining communities would further “open” large swathes of land for the development of Israeli outposts and settlements, consolidating Israel’s unlawful annexation of large parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and denying the Palestinians their right to self-determination.

Meanwhile, the Khirbet Zanuta community in the south Hebron hills, which was displaced following sustained settler violence, won a court order to allow them to return to their land and homes after fleeing settler violence. However, the community is being prevented from returning

as Israeli authorities apply discriminatory planning laws to prohibit them from rebuilding their homes destroyed meanwhile by settlers and demand their transfer to a remote area adjacent to Areas A and B, demonstrating the collusion between settler violence and the state is displacing Palestinian communities.

More than 1600 Palestinians from herding and farming communities have been forced to leave their homes since 7 October following unrelenting settler violence and systematic restrictions on access to water, grazing land and basic needs, with the collusion of Israeli authorities.

ENDS

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