

22nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council
25 February – 22 March 2013

Agenda item 7, GD, HC/SG reports

**International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
(EAFORD)**

Expansion of Israeli Settlements

Delivered by Ms. Daniela Dönges

Mr. President,

EAFORD would like to thank the High Commissioner for her report, in which she addresses the issues at stake in the occupied Palestinian territories and would like to draw the Council's attention to the Human Rights Violations linked to the expansion of settlements.

Madam High Commissioner, in your report you underline that international human rights law is applicable in the occupied Palestinian territories. However, despite pertinent UN resolutions declaring the existence of the settlements illegal, Israel has significantly increased its settlement activities since the General Assembly's decision of November 2012 to recognize Palestine as non-member state. The day following the General Assembly's vote the Israeli Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to develop 3000 further housing units. Since then, demolitions of Palestinian properties have increased. In January alone, a total of 55 Palestinian housing units has been demolished, a number which is seven times higher than the average number of demolitions in 2012 and higher than the average number of demolitions in any other year since the beginning of statistics in 1987.

The implications of the settlements on the Palestinian people have been widely reported by the Fact Finding Mission. A multitude of checkpoints, separate road systems and a distinct legal system have led to a situation where the Palestinians' right to self-determination as well as the right to non-discrimination are systematically undermined. This situation is especially reflected in Hebron, where settlements have been installed in the heart of the city. About 600 settlers live in these settlements, with a military presence of about 1500 soldiers. The main market street has been closed to Palestinians and thus limits the movement of 95% of the population. Over 1500 Palestinian shops were closed due to military orders or the restrictions imposed on the Palestinian Population. The remaining families are subject to daily settler attacks, which according to a report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, appears to aim at pushing Palestinian families out of the area. However, settlers are rarely held accountable but numerous cases have been reported where Palestinian victims have been arrested instead of the offenders.

Madam High Commissioner, commitment to international human rights standards is a prerequisite for healthy international relations and a fundamental obligation for all member states. In view of the recent developments, the international community cannot wait until Israel creates more precedents but should react as soon as possible to restore peace and justice in the region, which will not only be in the interest of the Palestinians but also in the interest of Israel itself and the whole world.

Thank you for your attention.

EAFORD
18 March 2013