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Israel/OPT: UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council presents key opportunity to highlight Israel's ongoing illegal settlement activity and its impact on Palestinians

On Friday 24 March the UN Security Council is due to receive the first Secretary-General's report on the implementation of [resolution 2334 \(2016\)](#). The resolution, passed on 23 December 2016, calls on Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), including East Jerusalem. It is the first Security Council resolution of its kind in over 35 years. It also requests that the Secretary-General report to the Security Council every three months on implementation of the resolution.

Currently, approximately 621,000 settlers are living in the occupied West Bank, including 200,000 in East Jerusalem.¹ As well as violating international humanitarian law and amounting to a war crime, Israel's policy of settling Jewish civilians in the OPT, which has been continuing for nearly 50 years, is inherently discriminatory and has resulted in grave [human rights violations](#), including the destruction of homes, forced evictions, unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions, movement restrictions, exploitation of Palestinian natural resources and collective punishment.

Since 23 December 2016, the Israeli authorities have authorized the construction of 6,219 further settlement homes in the occupied West Bank, including 719 in East Jerusalem, a move that flies in the face of resolution 2334 (2016) and demonstrates flagrant disregard for international law.

Moreover, on 6 February the Israeli Knesset passed a law allowing government seizure of private Palestinian land on which settlements have been established. In effect the law undermines the ability of Palestinian land owners to lay claim to their land if Israeli settlers are living on it, despite the fact that the settlers' presence in occupied territory is illegal under international law. The organization Peace Now has estimated that the law will retroactively "legalize" 53 settlements and outposts - allowing for the expropriation of

¹ The Times of Israel, Settler group says 421,000 Israelis now living in West Bank, 9 February 2017, available: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/settler-group-says-421000-israelis-now-living-in-west-bank/>; The Guardian, Israel announces 2,500 more West Bank settlement homes, 24 January 2017, available: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/24/israel-announces-2500-more-west-bank-settlement-homes>.

approximately 8,000 dunams (80 hectares) of private Palestinian land.² The law also risks galvanising the confiscation of yet more private Palestinian land by providing a basis for retroactive legalization of land grabs.

Although last month's operation to remove more than 300 Jewish settlers from the illegal West Bank outpost of [Amona](#) after Israel's Supreme Court ruled it was built on private Palestinian land was welcome, Amnesty International is concerned by subsequent [reports](#) that an order barring access to the land is being enforced only against Palestinians, including those who own the land, and not against settlers or other Israelis. It is imperative that access to the land is granted to its Palestinian owners.

Israeli Prime Minister's Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated public [commitment](#) to establish a new settlement for evacuated residents of Amona is equally alarming. The Israeli position on Amona is set to be discussed during ongoing talks between Israeli and U.S. officials. All Israeli settlement construction in the OPT is illegal under international law and the construction of further settlements cannot be justified by a need to house residents of a previously dismantled settlement. Amnesty International is also concerned by reports suggesting that the U.S. government will tacitly accept settlement activity in East Jerusalem and within specific settlement blocs in the occupied West Bank. Such a position would demonstrate clear disregard for international law and resolution 2334 (2016).

In light of the above, it is imperative that UN Secretary-General António Guterres issues a detailed written report, as well as delivering an oral update to the Security Council on Friday, outlining Israel's recent settlement activity and the long-term human rights impact associated with the settlement enterprise. Amnesty International urges the Secretary-General to continue to present these written reports and update the Security Council on implementation – or lack thereof – of resolution 2334 (2016) every three months, as stipulated in the resolution.

² Peace Now, "Legalization Law Will Stain Israel's Law Books", 29 January 2017, available at: http://peacenow.org.il/en/legalization_law; See also Haaretz, "Explained: Israel's New Palestinian Land-grab Law and Why It Matters", 7 February 2017, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.770102>.