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## UN inquiry calls for sanctions against Israel over West Bank settlements

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<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/un-inquiry-calls-for-sanctions-aga...> [1]

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A UN Human Rights Council fact-finding mission on Thursday released its harshest report over Israeli policy in the West Bank since 1967, urging governments and private corporations across the world to consider economic and political sanctions against Israel over its construction in the settlements [2]. This is the first time such a call has been made from within the United Nations.

*[Click here to view the fact-finding mission's full report](#)*[3]

"The Mission calls upon all Member States to comply with their obligations under international law and to assume their responsibilities in their relationship to a State breaching peremptory norms of international law – specifically not to recognize an unlawful situation resulting from Israel's violations," said a report by the inquiry led by French judge Christine Chanet.

"Private companies must assess the human rights impact of their activities and take all necessary steps – including by terminating their business interests in the settlements – to ensure they are not adversely impacting the human rights of the Palestinian People in conformity with international law," the report added.

"The Mission calls upon all Member States to take appropriate measures to ensure that business enterprises domiciled in their territory and/or under their jurisdiction, including those owned or controlled by them, that conduct activities in or related to the settlements respect human rights throughout their operations."

The report also called on Israel to halt settlement expansion and withdraw all settlers from the West Bank, saying that its practices violated international law.

"Israel must, in compliance with article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, cease all settlement activities without preconditions. It must immediately initiate a process of withdrawal of all settlers from the OPT [occupied Palestinian territories]," the investigators wrote in the report.

The settlements contravene the 1949 Geneva Conventions forbidding the transfer of civilian populations into occupied territory, which could amount to war crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court [ICC], it said.

In December, the Palestinians accused Israel in a letter to the United Nations of planning to commit further "war crimes" by expanding settlements after the Palestinians won de facto UN recognition of statehood and warned that Jerusalem must be held accountable.

The Human Rights Council decided in March to dispatch a fact-finding <sup>[4]</sup> mission <sup>[4]</sup> to evaluate the effects of Israeli settlement construction on Palestinian human rights in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Then Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman threatened that Israel would sever its contact <sup>[5]</sup> with the council. No Israeli representatives attended any of the council's deliberations, and refused to cooperate with the investigation.

The independent UN investigators interviewed more than 50 people who came to Jordan in November to testify about confiscated land, damage to their livelihoods including olive trees, and violence by settlers, according to the report.

The report discusses at length the "price-tag" attacks carried out by extremists in the West Bank against Palestinians or Israeli bodies to protest the government's policies in the settlements.

"The Mission has noted that the identities of settlers who are responsible for violence and intimidation are known to the Israeli authorities, yet these acts continue with impunity," the report said. "The Mission is led to the clear conclusion that there is institutionalized discrimination against the Palestinian people when it comes to addressing violence."

"The Mission believes that the motivation behind this violence and the intimidation against the Palestinians as well as their properties is to drive the local populations away from their lands and allow the settlements to expand," it added. "The Mission calls upon the government of Israel to ensure full accountability for all violations, including for all acts of settler violence, in a non-discriminatory manner and to put an end to the policy of impunity."

### **"Creeping Annexation"**

About 250 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been established since 1967 and they hold an estimated 520,000 settlers, according to the UN report. The settlements impede Palestinian access to water resources and agricultural lands, it said.

The settlements were "leading to a creeping annexation that prevents the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state and undermines the right of the Palestinian people to

self-determination," it said.

After the General Assembly upgraded the Palestinians status at the world body, Israel said it would build 3,000 more settler homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem - areas Palestinians wanted for a future state, along with the Gaza Strip.

The UN human rights inquiry said that the International Criminal Court had jurisdiction over the deportation or transfer by the occupying power of its own population into the territory.

"Ratification of the [Rome] Statute by Palestine may lead to accountability for gross violations of human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and justice for victims," the UN report said, referring to the treaty setting up the Hague-based UN tribunal which prosecutes people for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Israel's Foreign Ministry slammed the report as "one-sided and biased".

"The Human Rights Council has sadly distinguished itself by its systematically one-sided and biased approach towards Israel," the ministry said in a statement. "This latest report is yet another unfortunate reminder of that."

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[3] <http://www.haaretz.com/resources/misc/HRCreport.pdf>

[4] <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/un-human-rights-body-to-probe-israel-s-settlement-activities-in-west-bank-1.420242>

[5] <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-cuts-contact-with-un-rights-council-to-protest-settlements-probe-1.420786>

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