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Enforce the UNHRC settlements report to push Israel out of its state of denial

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It is time for Israel to relinquish its current state of denial and confront reality. It is clear to everyone, including Micronesia and the Marshall Islands (two of the few countries who voted against [Palestine's recognition as a state](#) [2] by the UN General Assembly), that Israeli settlements are illegal and that Israel should withdraw to the 1967 border. In fact, according to international law, to move civilians from the occupying power to an occupied territory is a war crime. And this is what Israel has been systemically doing over the past 46 years.

The [UN Fact-Finding Mission report](#) [3] on Israeli settlements is an excellent opportunity for Israel to put an end to this state of denial. After being banned by Israel from visiting the settlements, the commission met with over 50 civil society representatives, Palestinians affected by settlements and settler violence, and a wide range of experts and officials, including myself. The report provides conclusions and findings that cannot be disputed. In fact, the report took most of its information on settlements from Israeli sources. It provides recommendations that the international community should examine carefully and enforce.

For the sake of peace and the integrity of the UN system, the world has an urgent responsibility to end decades of Israeli impunity by implementing not only the recommendations of this most recent report, but others, including statements from other UN agencies, the International Court of Justice, and the European Union.

Today, over half a million settlers live in the occupied State of Palestine. They are distributed all over the West Bank, including Occupied East Jerusalem. Successive Israeli governments have been directly involved in the colonization of Palestine, particularly those of Mr.

Netanyahu, who has prioritized placating the settlers over his international commitments. In all likelihood, Israel will not pay attention to what the report states and will continue to plan and build more colonies. Indeed, Israel's recent refusal to show up for the UN Human Rights Council review, the only country of the 194 states to do so, speaks volumes about its disregard for international law. This report is an opportunity for the international community to hold Israel accountable and end a culture of impunity that has all but destroyed the possibility of a two-state solution.

Though Israeli officials have highly criticized the report, it is a matter of fact that Israel violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute, both of which consider all Israeli settlement activities to be illegal. The report therefore reaffirms what several international law experts have said before: that Israel is liable to be prosecuted for war crimes. The Israeli response, saying that the report is biased, merely demonstrates that Israel has been given no incentive from the international community to change its illegal behavior. The State of Palestine will continue to use all non-violent, diplomatic, political, and legal tools at its disposal. But the international community must support our efforts if we are to succeed in preserving the two-state solution.

This is a report which should be read by every single Israeli citizen. What their politicians have been telling them about "neighborhoods" in "disputed territories" are actually colonies in another country. Moreover, Israelis need to realize that the moral corruption of the occupation has led to hatred and violence. Settler terror, an integral part of the Israeli colonial enterprise, has become mainstream. Burning churches, mosques, trees and homes is hopefully not something that many Israelis will take pride in.

As the report states, the onus is on 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." It reaffirms that international law should be the basis for any peace process, if it is to be meaningful. Furthermore, it states the legal obligations of the international community. International action is a must if Israel is to change its current state of denial for one of justice and peace.

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