

**State of Palestine
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**Mustafa Barghouthi: The International community must
do more to safeguard Palestinian rights**

Please find below the latest Op-Ed by Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi, PLO Executive Committee member and head of the Palestinian National Initiative, entitled *“The International Community must do more to safeguard Palestinian rights”*, published in Haaretz on July 22nd, 2015.

Link to the article: http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.667192?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

**The international community must do
more to safeguard Palestinian rights**

As Palestine is calling on the world to stop the demolition of Sussia, now is a good time to reflect on international inaction regarding Israel's illegal annexation wall.

By [Mustafa Barghouti](#) | Jul. 22, 2015 | 10:41 AM

At a moment when Palestine is calling upon the world to stop the [demolition](#) of the village of Sussia, near Hebron, it is important to remind the international community of its responsibility under international law. Eleven years ago, the International Court of Justice issued an [opinion](#) on Israel's annexation wall that

clarified the role that states should play in ending Israeli violations of Palestinian rights, including the right to self-determination.

Palestine went to the ICJ at the time, asking that court to rule on the illegality and consequences of the wall, which was then a new development. The court's conclusions were clear: The wall is designed to annex Palestinian land, its route is unnecessary for Israel's security and Israel has the obligation to dismantle the wall and compensate the Palestinians affected by it.

Yet 11 years later, the Israeli annexation wall has expanded. In the meanwhile, it has brought devastating social, economic and political consequences for the Palestinian people. Some 85% of the wall is not built along the Green Line, the designated border between Israel and the West Bank, but on occupied Palestinian land, going as deep as 22 kilometers inside the occupied West Bank. Its goal is to turn occupation into annexation, including the areas in and around Occupied East Jerusalem.

Regarding the role of the international community, the ICJ concluded that all states are obliged not to recognize the illegal status quo resulting from the construction of the wall. Additionally they must assist in preventing this crime. But what has been the international response? Unfortunately, the wall and the illegal situation it maintains persist: Building and expansion of settlements continues with impunity, and several companies operate inside occupied Palestinian territory that Israel aims to annex via the wall.

The PLO's current strategy of [turning to international forums](#), including joining the Geneva Convention and the International Criminal Court, is an attempt to achieve overdue inalienable Palestinian rights by ending Israel's culture of impunity. The ICJ wall opinion is a good example of Israel's disregard for international law. There has been no significant change in the relations between the world and Israel since that legal opinion was issued, even though Israel continued to build the annexation wall, settlements and other colonial infrastructure following the ruling. Even though the 2004 opinion has yet to be

enforced, we will continue reminding the international community of its responsibility.

Between 2004 and 2015, the number of Israeli settlers in occupied Palestine has grown from 421,000 settlers to more than 600,000, according to the PLO Negotiation Affairs Department's data, yet the EU -Israel Association Agreement, which is the legal basis for relations between the two sides and conditions these relations on progress in the political track and respect for human rights, has not even been questioned by the European community. Every single European official I've met has told me that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not want a solution. Each time, I've asked what they are planning to do. Their lack of a concrete response is fuel for the almost 11,000 settler attacks against Palestinians committed since 2004, according to Palestine Monitoring Group data, and the continued construction of a wall that snakes into Palestinian land, dividing between Palestinians.

The extremist Israeli government still counts on the fact that nobody is going to take effective action against Israel for its crimes in Palestine. And unfortunately, various statements calling upon “the parties” to “resume negotiations” rather than holding the belligerent occupying power accountable for its ongoing crimes, give Palestinians even more reason to be skeptical about the “peace process.” It has been proven to be a means to granting impunity to Israel rather than a means to a just and lasting peace.

The Palestinian people responded to the annexation wall with popular committees organizing communities against the Wall. Names of villages that were not familiar to many - such as Bil'in and Nil'in – became famous for their steadfastness. From Cremisan to Burin, Palestinians from all social spectrums challenged the annexation of their land with non-violent creativity that brought solidarity from international civil society. Those brave actions were a concrete response to Israeli violence and violations of international law as stated in the ICJ opinion, yet most of the international community is still debating whether Israeli settlement products should be labeled.

Is this the response that the region's main non-violent movement deserves? Lack of diplomatic action leading to concrete steps such as the overdue recognition of the State of Palestine and the banning of settlement products will only produce more despair for a people peacefully struggling for their internationally recognized rights.

The ICJ opinion reaffirms the fact that to support and fulfill the Palestinian right to self-determination is an obligation for each state to uphold under international law.

Dr. Mustafa Barghouti is a member of the PLO Executive Committee, the Higher National Committee for the ICC and is the Secretary General of the Palestinian National Initiative (Al Mubadara).

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