

**State of Palestine
Palestine Liberation Organization
Negotiations Affairs Department**

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**Statement by Dr. Saeb Erekat on recent Israeli plans to displace
Palestinians and expand illegal settlements**

Israel has systematically pursued a policy of forcible transfer of civilian Palestinian populations, which is a crime against humanity under International law, and in the process has replaced the indigenous Palestinian population with foreign settlers-throughout Occupied Palestine. In particular, this policy has drastically affected Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the southern Hebron region. Some of the most dramatic examples of such policies can be seen in the villages of Abu Nawar and Susiya, in Jerusalem and Hebron respectively. Just today, Israeli forces uprooted 400 olive trees from the village of Beit Ula in the Hebron District.

The forcible transfer of Palestinians continues as Israel is preparing to announce further settlement construction in the illegal settlements of Beit El, Ma'ale Adumim, Giv'at Ze'ev, Psagot, Beit Arieah and Giv'on, all of them located between Nablus and Jerusalem. In total, these illegal settlements will amount to 906 new housing units, to accommodate approximately 4,500 new settlers in Occupied Palestine at the expense of the Palestinian community whose land these settlers will occupy. These housing units could not be approved without the impunity the international community has granted Israel.

The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians through settlement construction continues as the international community fails to take concrete steps in order to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law. Israel, the occupying power, systematically ignores all calls made to stop its violations and crimes, particularly those calls made by the European community. The international community has a responsibility to ban settlement products and divest from all companies and organizations complicit in the Israeli settlement enterprise.

The Palestinian leadership will continue taking the necessary steps within international forums, including cooperating with the International Criminal

Court, in order to end Israeli crimes and achieve the long overdue inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Khirbet Susya Village Case

- The case of Susiya village is just one example among many others of Israel's systematic policy of evictions and forced displacement in Occupied Palestine.
- The village is located south of Hebron Hills and is currently home to 55 nuclear families (around 370 people) who have been historically earning a living from grazing and growing olive trees in the area.
- In 1983, Israel established the illegal Israeli settlement of Susya on the village's land and embarked on new policies that aims at forcing residents out of the village in order to expand Susya settlement.
- In 1986, Israeli authorities declared Susya village lands as 'an archeological site' and expelled all its residents from their homes, and since then the residents of Susya have been facing repeated evictions and ongoing demolitions.
- The villagers were obliged to rebuild on adjacent lands and have been fighting ever since to remain. Several waves of demolitions took place most notable in 2001 and 2011 when the entire village was demolished and its residents were displaced again.
- Settlers of the illegal settlement of Susiya, protected by Israeli occupation forces, have engaged in continuous attacks and intimidations against Susya's residents. As a result, villagers have limited access to about 2,000 dunums of their grazing and farming lands (OCHA, 2015). This has been taken as an opportunity for Israeli settlers to continue their violations, including uprooting their trees.
- Despite attempts of the villagers to stop the plans to demolish their village once again, the so called Israeli High Court of “Justice” gave its occupation forces green light to demolish the village and to forcibly transfer their population. The structures facing demolition include residential tents, animal shelters, family utility structures, cisterns, two clinics, a school and a kindergarten (OCHA, 2015).
- Israeli occupation forces aim at forcibly transfer the people of Susiya to the city of Yatta.