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UN reports highlight Israeli infringement of Palestinians' rights

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has spotlighted in two new reports to the General Assembly how Israeli practices impinge upon the rights of Palestinians through the continued building of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and other means.

In one publication, Mr. Ban stressed that United Nations resolutions and a 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) both reflect how Israel's construction of settlements - "in effect, the transfer by an occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" - breach the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Other activities, such as land requisition and the destruction of houses and orchards, are also "illegal," he writes.

Between 1967 and the end of last year, Israel set up 120 settlements in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, and as of this August, over 1,000 new buildings were being erected in the settlements, the [report](#) says.

"The existence of settlements restricts the freedom of movement of Palestinians resident in the West Bank in several ways," the Secretary-General notes, with Palestinians barred from entering settlement areas without a special permit.

"Despite the claim of the Government of Israel that the internal closure system within the West Bank is imposed on Palestinian residents there for security purposes, most of those internal restrictions on movement are largely premised on the protection of Israeli settlers and settlements and are designed to provide settlers with unobstructed travel capacity between settlements and to Israel itself."

Further, the report, covering the period between January and August of this year, says that one-third of settlements and land incorporated into these areas is private Palestinian-owned land, much of which was expropriated by Israel on the grounds of military necessity.

Mr. Ban calls on the Israeli Government to abide by its commitments to dismantle outposts built after March 2001 and freeze settlement activity called for in the so-called Road Map, which foresees a two-State solution with Israel and the Palestinians living side by side in peace, as well as the Annapolis Joint Statement of 27 November 2007, which was intended to reinvigorate the peace process.

He also urges Israel to take steps to curb attacks by Israeli settlers against civilians in the occupied territory and guarantee that violent incidents are properly investigated.

The second [report](#) made public today covers the same time period as the other, and says that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is "worsening."

Regarding closures, the Secretary-General says that Israel's closures have had serious consequences, including economic ones, on Palestinians. "The restrictions continue to undermine the enjoyment of other rights guaranteed under international human rights law by effectively impeding access to health care, education and employment."

In the West Bank, restrictions have blocked access to such services as health and education, while "approximately 1.4 million Palestinians are forcibly confined in the Gaza Strip, where

social and economic conditions are deteriorating rapidly," he writes.

The wall erected in June 2002 by Israel to separate it from the West Bank further impedes access for Palestinians, the report says. "In addition to its immediate impact on freedom of movement, the wall and the associated restrictions of movement significantly undermine the enjoyment of a host of other fundamental human rights."

It calls on the Assembly and the international community to take measures to further the implementation of the decisions, resolutions and recommendations of the Security Council, ICJ and UN human rights mechanisms.

The Secretary-General also says the Assembly should ask for the Council's help in putting into practice the ICJ's 2004 advisory opinion that said that the building of a barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory is illegal, called for an end to construction and said Israel should make reparations for any damage caused.