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Statement submitted by:

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1948, 1967, 2007 ...the population transfer continues

After 59 years of Nakba, or Catastrophe: the creation of Israel and the ensuing Arab-Israeli war which resulted in over 750,000 Palestinians fleeing or being forcefully removed from their land. And 40 years of occupation of the West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Today, 70 percent of the Palestinian people are either refugees and/or internally displaced persons; the largest and longest unresolved refugee case in the world. There are approximately 6.8 million Palestinian refugees and 400,000 internally displaced persons, including around 2.7 million refugee children. Many have been displaced two or three times; and the displacement continues.

We still witness on the ground the daily displacement of Palestinians as a result of Israel's policy of expansion consisting of land confiscation, revocation of residency rights in eastern Jerusalem, home demolition, construction and expansion of colonies, closure, and the construction of the Wall and its associated regime. Forced evictions and home demolitions are some of the main causes of forced displacement in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. All these measures have the same goal: the acquisition of Palestinian land with as few Palestinians as possible.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, the case of the Jahalin Bedouin, all of which are 1948 refugees, is a striking example of the routine displacement of Palestinians. Up to 3,000 Bedouin face displacement as a result of the construction of the Wall and of the new E1 colony next to the Jewish colony of Ma'ale Adumim in the occupied West Bank. Other Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley are also threatened by eviction and demolition orders as well as closure. The villages of Hadadiyya and al Aqaba for instance are under threat of demolition.¹ Similarly, the inhabitants of al Nu'man village in Bethlehem are now fighting for the survival of their community as the Jewish colony of Har Homa expands and the Wall suffocates the village.² Thousands of inhabitants of the "Closed Areas" located between the Wall and the Green Line are encountering increasing difficulties

1 See The Humanitarian Monitor, No.10, Jerusalem: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, February 2007, p.1 and A Village in the Way: Al Aqaba and the Grab of the Jordan Valley, Ramallah: Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiations Affairs Department, June 2006.

2 See Grazia Careccia and John J. Reynolds, Al-Nu'man Village: A Case Study of Indirect Forcible Transfer, Ramallah: Al Haq, November 2006.

in accessing their land, and are thus vulnerable to forced displacement. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that “Palestinians residing in IDF [Israeli Defense Force] declared 'Closed Areas' face an uncertain future in terms of their personal and land status.”³ An Israeli NGO, B'Tselem, has released a study proving that Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from 1,000 homes in Hebron.⁴

Within Israel, Palestinians are subject to land confiscation and home demolition, particularly in the Galilee and the Naqab (Negev) where Israel has undertaken a policy termed “Judaisation.” In the first two months of 2007, for instance, the homes of 33 Palestinian Bedouin families were demolished in order to force them to move to planned 'townships' which are unsuitable for their way of life. Thousands of homes are slated for demolition in the Naqab.

The number of cases of population transfer, affecting both Palestinian refugees and non-refugees, abound. Yet, no international response has been developed to prevent and respond to the forced displacement of Palestinians or to look for a durable solution based on their right of return, restitution and compensation. Israeli officials have yet to be held accountable for their discriminatory actions which lead to population transfers in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Badil and Defence for Children International/Palestine Section thus calls upon the Council to

1. Appoint a Special Rapporteur or expert to examine discriminatory practices affecting Palestinians and other minorities in Israel, including the repeated and ongoing displacement of Palestinian citizens of Israel, many of whom are 1948 refugees;
2. Call upon members of the General Assembly to bring claims against Israel in the International Court of Justice, to ensure that Israel complies with its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular respect for the right of return, restitution and compensation of Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons;
3. Call for a joint country visit to Israel and the OPT by the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Mr. Walter Kälin; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Mr. Miloon Kothari; and, Special Rapporteur on the situation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen.
4. Preserve the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967;
5. Consider urging state members of the UN to take measures such as economic sanctions and diplomatic boycott against Israel for its breach of international law and non-implementation of UN Resolutions, as concluded by the International Court of Justice in its 9 July 2004 Advisory Opinion on *The Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*.

³ Preliminary Analysis of the Humanitarian Implications of the April 2006 Barrier Projections, Update 5, Jerusalem: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, April 2006, p.3.

⁴ See Ofir Feuerstein, Ghost Town: Israel's Separation Policy and Forced Eviction of Palestinians from the Center of Hebron, B'Tselem and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), May 2007.