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To Ms. Rolnik:

We, Palestinian human rights organizations, are writing to bring your attention to a grave matter concerning the right to adequate housing. In the shadows of the Human Rights Council's commencement of its Sixteenth Session, Israeli authorities have issued yet another series of eviction notices to Palestinian families residing in East Jerusalem. The notices perpetuate a policy of population transfer of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention as well as the right to adequate housing as enshrined in the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

On March 6, 2011, Israeli police and Jerusalem municipality issued 15 eviction notices to families in the Ar-Rashid building in Beit Hanina. The orders only given the families ten days to leave their homes, after which time the homes will be demolished. The demolition will affect 150 people. Israeli authorities claim that the residents do not have the proper permits although they insist that the permit process begun well before construction of the homes began.

Israeli building and zoning policies deliberately work to forcibly displace Palestinian families from East Jerusalem where the State is embarking on a settlement expansion campaign, known as the "Open Spaces" plan. Israel's housing policies comport with a broader State policy aimed at forcibly displacing Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Where Israel has not zoned for construction in Jerusalem, building permits are impossible to obtain thus leading to the wholesale destruction of commercial and personal property as well as the displacement of thousands of Palestinians. Palestinians living in Jerusalem are currently confined to reside in just 7% of the city, in mostly inadequate housing, though they represent about 1/3 of Jerusalem's population.<sup>1</sup> According to OCHA, the number of construction granted permits neither meets the natural growth, nor the housing needs among Palestinians. OCHA estimates that the gap between legally permitted and actual construction annually is 1,100 housing units.<sup>2</sup>

From 2000 to 2008, Israeli authorities demolished 670 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem on the basis that they were 'illegal,' forcibly displacing thousands. Today there exist 1,500 pending demolition orders in East Jerusalem alone and between January and March 1, 2011, Israeli authorities have destroyed 10 residential structures in East Jerusalem affecting 67 persons, 41 of whom are children.

As you note in your most recent Report to the Human Rights Council, complex situations, especially in the case of prolonged and mass displacement, pose a serious challenge to the provision of adequate housing. As concerns Palestinians in East Jerusalem in particular, a lack of tenure security coupled with discriminatory

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<sup>1</sup> East Jerusalem Demolitions, ICAD, at: [http://www.icahd.org/?page\\_id=5374](http://www.icahd.org/?page_id=5374).

<sup>2</sup> The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem, April 2009, p. 12.

housing policies, renders this population especially vulnerable to housing rights violations. Accordingly we urge you to consider your recommendations in specific reference to Israeli housing policies. Israel's housing policies constitute a core component of the conflict and ending this policy is requisite for both conflict resolution as well as the assurance of an adequate right to housing among Palestinians. In the immediate short-term we urge you to call upon Israel to rescind its most recent demolition orders to the residents of the Ar-Rashid building in East Jerusalem's Beit Hanina neighborhood.

Respectfully submitted,

Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Palestinian Center for Human Rights

Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem

Defence Children International-Palestine Section

Housing and Land Rights Network-Habitat International Coalition

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