



Letter to UN Security Council Members (Sent 26 April 2021)

Dear Security Council Member,

Pax Christi International, the international Catholic peace movement, urges you to immediately oppose the impending home evictions by Israel in the neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan. Of urgent concern is the looming deadline of 2 May 2021 when several extended families in Sheikh Jarrah are to be removed from their homes. This deadline comes not only amid a global pandemic but in the middle of the holy month of Ramadan and on Easter as celebrated in the Christian Orthodox and other Eastern churches' traditions.

We call on the international community to vehemently denounce these plans and all other actions by the Israeli government to forcibly displace Palestinians either by eviction or home demolitions for the purpose of settler expansion.

East Jerusalem continues to be recognized as occupied territory that was illegally annexed by Israel after 1967. Annexation or acquisition of land through threat or the use of force is strictly forbidden in international law and is a cornerstone of the *Charter of the United Nations*.¹

UN Security Council Resolution 242 (Nov. 1967) explicitly states the principle of "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by war".² This principle has been re-affirmed by the Security Council on seven occasions. In 2010, the Rome Statute's definition of aggression was expanded to include annexation of territory by the use of force.³

UN Resolution 478 (Aug. 1980) specifically states that "all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying power, which have altered or purports to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem ...are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith." The resolution goes on to warn that such actions constitute a "serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East".⁴

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention⁵ specifically prohibits the forcible transfer of protected populations by an occupying power.

Yet, Israel continues to flagrantly ignore these United Nations Security Council resolutions and foundational principles of international law. All the time receiving nothing more than verbal

¹ <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/purposes-and-principles-un-chapter-i-un-charter>

² <https://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>

³ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resourcelibrary/official-journal/rome-statute.aspx>

⁴ <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB>

⁵ https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf

rebukes... a mere slap-on-the wrist while families watch bulldozers demolish their houses or are forcibly evicted from their homes.

The recent decision by an Israeli court which ruled in favor of Jewish settlers is one in a long line of purposeful actions to remove Palestinian residents from East Jerusalem and the West Bank, especially in neighborhoods nearest to the Old City.

Prof. Michael Lynk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, in collaboration with other Special Rapporteurs, issued a statement on 14 April 2021 warning of rising levels of Israeli settler violence. In the statement, specific reference to these impending evictions was cited:

“Similarly worrying are reports that over 70 families living in the Karm Al-Ja’ouni area of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem are under threat of forced eviction to make place for new settlements. Seven households have already received eviction orders and asked to vacate their homes by 2 May 2021. Such forced evictions leading to population transfers are strictly prohibited under international law.”⁶

This joint statement comes three months after Prof. Lynk’s specific call for Israel to reverse its evictions orders. In that statement he said:

“These evictions are extremely alarming and appear to be part of a broader pattern of forcing Jerusalemite Palestinian families from their homes to clear the way for more illegal Israeli settlements. Time is running short for these orders to be reversed.”

“The eviction orders are not random but appear to be strategically focused on an area in East Jerusalem known as the Historic Basin. They seem to be aimed at clearing the way for the establishment of more illegal Israeli settlements in the area and physically segregating and fragmenting East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. We believe that one of their purposes is the creation of a Jewish majority in occupied East Jerusalem, in order to establish demographic facts on the ground that would confirm the illegal Israeli annexation over that part of the city.”⁷

These eviction orders reflect an alarming increase of applications and ensuing lawsuits by settler organizations (many of which are richly endowed by parties inside and out of Israel) to claim rights to land under the 1970 Legal and Administrative Matters Law. ⁸

Citing reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Mr. Lynk said that 877 people, nearly half of whom are children, are at imminent risk of being forcibly evicted as a result of these lawsuits. He warned **“The latest eviction orders, if carried out, would amount to a violation by Israel, the occupying power, of the prohibition against the forcible transfer of the protected population under Article 49 of the *Fourth Geneva Convention*.”⁹**

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/PS/Pages/SRPalestine.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26648&LangID=E>

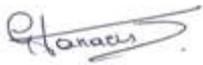
⁸ <https://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Legal-papaer-batan-sheikh-jarrah-eng.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26648&LangID=E>

He went on to remind the international community of their responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure that Israel abides fully by its obligations under international law.

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, which has severely impacted Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, Israel's decision to go forward with these evictions is unconscionable and cruel. To be silent about this is to be complicit.

Sincerely,



Greet Vanaerschot
Secretary General
Pax Christi International

Pax Christi International is a global Catholic peace movement working worldwide for peace, respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation. Today, the movement has 120 Member Organisations active in more than 50 countries worldwide. PCI has maintained special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1979 and is active at the United Nations in NY, Geneva and with UNESCO.

