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UN officials and NGO partners call for a halt to plans to displace Palestine refugees from Sheikh Jarrah

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Today, we visited the Sabbagh family in their home, who face imminent forced eviction from their home in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, part of the occupied Palestinian territory, and are at heightened risk of forcible transfer.

The Sabbagh family are Palestine refugees originally from Jaffa city, who were settled in the neighbourhood, along with 27 other families, with the support of the United Nations and the Jordanian government, in the 1950s. Like other families in the area, for years they have been engaged in a legal dispute opposing efforts by Israeli settler organizations to evict them from their homes. Recently, this legal struggle was deemed unsuccessful as Israeli courts have ruled in favour of the settlers' claims. Thirty-two members of the Sabbagh family, including six children, now face forced eviction, while an additional 19 members will be directly affected by the loss of the family property, should the eviction take place.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, strict obligations apply with regard to the prohibition of forcible transfer and forced eviction. Along with house demolitions, forced evictions are one of the major factors contributing to the creation of a coercive environment that may result in no other choice for individuals or communities but to leave. Forcible transfer is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Forced evictions contrary to international law also violate the right to adequate housing and the right to privacy, and may be incompatible with other human rights.

In many cases in East Jerusalem, including in Sheikh Jarrah, the forced eviction of Palestinians is occurring within the context of Israeli settlement construction and expansion, illegal under international humanitarian law. An estimated 3,500 Israelis are currently living in settlements established with the support of the Israeli authorities in the heart of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem. In Sheikh Jarrah alone, more than

200 Palestinians face potential eviction, should they be unsuccessful in similar cases currently before Israeli courts.

We call on the Israeli authorities to immediately halt plans to evict the Sabbagh family to prevent further displacement of these refugees, cease settlement construction, and abide by their obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.