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Israel's settlement expansion drives mass displacement in West Bank – UN report

17 March 2026

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GENEVA – The Government of Israel has accelerated unlawful settlement expansion and annexation of large parts of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, forcibly displacing over 36,000 Palestinians amid increasing violence by Israeli security forces and settlers, says a UN Human Rights Office **report**.

The report, which covers the 12-month period up to 31 October 2025, documents 1,732 incidents of settler violence resulting in casualties or property damage, compared to 1,400 in the previous reporting period. This includes relentless harassment, intimidation, and destruction of homes and farmland.

“Settler violence continued in a coordinated, strategic and largely unchallenged manner, with Israeli authorities playing the central role in directing, participating in or enabling this conduct,” the report says, making it difficult to distinguish between State and settler violence. Longstanding and pervasive impunity is “facilitating and encouraging violence against and harassment of Palestinians”, it adds.

Last October, around the time of the olive harvest, the report documented 42 settler attacks leading to the injury of 131 Palestinians, including 14 women and a boy, the highest number recorded in a single month since 2006. Daily attacks by armed settlers, soldiers and “settler soldiers” – many of whom have been armed, equipped and trained by State authorities – along with the closure of more land to Palestinian landowners and harvesters made the 2025 season the worst in decades.

In some cases, the report found acts of gender-based violence became the final trigger for displacement. Other attacks led to family separation in which women and children were forced to leave, while male family members remained to attempt to retain possession of lands and properties.

“The displacement in the occupied West Bank, which coincides with the extensive displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, at the hands of the Israeli military, appears to indicate a concerted Israeli policy of mass forcible transfer throughout the occupied territory, aimed at permanent displacement, raising concerns of ethnic cleansing,” the report says.

It pointed to the heightened risk of displacement faced by thousands of Palestinians from Bedouin communities located northeast of East Jerusalem due to the advancement of settlement plans, adding that the unlawful transfer of protected people is a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The report notes that such acts potentially incur the individual criminal responsibility of officials engaged in them, and under certain circumstances, may also amount to a crime against humanity.

The report also concludes that the transfer of power from the Israeli military to civilian authorities, measures to confiscate Palestinian lands for settlement expansion, as well as other discriminatory policies and practices “amounted to an institutionalised regime of systematic discrimination, oppression and violence by Israel against Palestinians”, violating the international law prohibition of racial segregation and apartheid.

The report points to the advancement or approval by Israeli authorities of 36,973 housing units in settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and around 27,200 in the rest of the West Bank. An unprecedented 84 new outposts were also established during the reporting period. The report also notes the expansion of settlement activity into Area B of the occupied West Bank, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority according to the Oslo agreements.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk calls on Israel to immediately and completely cease and reverse the establishment and expansion of settlements, for the evacuation all settlers, and an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory. Israel must also enable the return of displaced Palestinians, and stop all practices of land confiscation, forced evictions and house demolitions.

To read the full report, click **here**.

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