Palestinian and Israeli Human Rights Groups Call for End to Israeli Military West Bank Deportation Policy

13 May 2010

We, the undersigned, express our opposition to Israel’s policy of unlawful transfer and deportation from the West Bank, which has escalated in the form of the Order regarding Prevention of Infiltration (Amendment No. 2) (No. 1650) ("Order 1650"). The order, effective April 13, 2010, defines anyone present in the West Bank as an “infiltrator”, unless he or she is in possession of a permit from Israel, and subjects those without permits to deportation, transfer, criminal charges, fines, and/or imprisonment. It is part of a series of steps taken by Israel to remove Palestinians from the West Bank by declaring them to be illegally present in their own homes.

The order is vaguely worded, such that it could apply to anyone, but the groups that appear to be targeted are:

- Bearers of Palestinian ID cards whose registered addresses are in the Gaza Strip in the Israeli copy of the Palestinian population registry.

- Those individuals without official status ("status-less"), including spouses of Palestinian residents for whom Israel refuses to approve ID cards and others who have not been added to the population registry or have had their status revoked or deleted by Israel;

- Foreigners visiting or working in the West Bank, including those for whom Israel refuses to renew visas.

Since 2000 Israel has significantly halted the Palestinian population registry update. Accordingly, tens of thousands of people, including those who were born and/or living in the West Bank for decades, are at risk of being torn away from their homes, families, schools, and jobs - because Israel has declared them "illegal" in their own land. Already, some of these people are limiting their own movement for fear of being arrested and removed from their homes. At a time when Israel is promising to "ease" restrictions in the West Bank, Order 1650 is choking the civilian population.

The order and the deportation policy violate Israel’s obligations under international law. They breach the prohibition, under the Fourth Geneva Convention, against forcible transfers or deportations of protected persons in occupied territory and therefore effectively legislate for the commission of grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. They breach the obligation, under the International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to allow persons legally present in their territory to enjoy freedom of movement and to choose their places of residence. They breach the obligation undertaken by Israel in the Oslo Accords - and enshrined in the Palestinian right to self-determination - to recognize the West Bank and Gaza as a single territorial unit, in which freedom of movement is to be facilitated.

We call upon the Government of Israel to rescind Order 1650, to desist from its policy of deportation and transfer, and to recognize the right of Palestinians and foreigners to live in, work in, and visit the West Bank, in accordance with international law and the international agreements to which Israel has committed, and to allow protected persons to move freely within the West Bank and to enter and leave freely.

We call upon the international community to take concrete and immediate steps to ensure that Israel refrains from prohibited practices of deportation and transfer of a civilian population, including by raising this issue at the highest political levels.