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Statement:
Illegal Dispossession, Land and Housing Appropriation of Palestinian Citizens of Israel in Israel

The Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights (BADIL) and the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), attend the Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council representing the Committee of the Uprooted Residents of Kafr Bir'im (CUB) and Mr. Abdullah Asad Shibli and other landholders of the Bedouin community of Arab As-Subieh. These comprise approximately 5,500 persons in the Galilee region of Israel whom Israeli authorities have first forcibly displaced, and then arbitrarily and illegally deprived of their land, through a system of state-sanctioned confiscations.

- In one case, the people of the Palestinian Christian village of Kafr Bir'im, situated near the Israeli-Lebanese border, were forced out their homes in 1948. Israeli authorities promised they would be allowed to return to their village within a few weeks. The Israeli government, however, never allowed the residents to return, and subsequently confiscated their land and property.
- In another case, Abdullah Asad Shibli and two other landholders are members of a Bedouin tribe called Arab As-Subieh. They held property in the area surrounding the village of Shibli before the creation of the State of Israel and for some time thereafter. Since 1948, the Israeli government has engaged in a process of gradually confiscating lands owned by the Bedouins of Arab As-Subieh. The tribe went from owning/holding and using over 18 square kilometres of land, to being forced to live on small parcels on a strip of land now known as the village of Shibli. Land belonging to the Arab As-Subieh continues to be confiscated today.

The cases described above are part of a systematic pattern and practice by Israeli authorities of confiscating land and property belonging to Palestinian citizens of Israel. As a result of these laws and policies, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, including Bedouins, have suffered forced displacement and property dispossession.

Israel's land regime and the systemic pattern and practice of racially discriminatory forced displacement violates numerous provisions of international customary and treaty law to which Israel is a party. These facts notwithstanding, in the cases described above, all efforts to obtain an adequate, fair and effective remedy for systemic wrongful property seizure under Israeli law, have failed. To date, no Israeli or international authority has intervened effectively to halt these processes, or to provide justice and/or due reparation to victims of these practices.

The members of these communities request that the Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council take measures to ensure that the Israeli government undertakes, without delay, the immediate annulment of all laws and policies that arbitrarily confiscate Palestinian land, as well as of those laws and policies which are racially discriminatory in purpose or effect against any person or group, and in particular against Palestinians. A number of further recommendations are included in a written statement tabled here at Council.