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Al-Walajah Village: Under Settlement and Isolation

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Introduction:

Following the June War in 1967, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government, the occupying power, hastily issued several legislations to annex occupied Jerusalem to its lands. On 25 June 1967, the Israeli government took a decision to enforce the Israeli law on occupied East Jerusalem. Two days later, the Knesset approved an amendment to the Law and Administration Ordinance of 1948 and added an article which provides that *"the law, jurisdiction and administration of the state shall extend to any area of Eretz [Land] Israel designated by the order of the government."* Following that, the Israeli Government issued a decree of the Law and Administration Ordinance No. (2) of 28 June 2018, which stipulates that the area mentioned in the decree is an area governed by the State's law and administration, including the area under the administration of the Arab Municipality before 1967 in addition to other areas that were annexed within the boundaries of Jerusalem. Moreover, the Knesset amended the Municipalities Law of 1967 by giving the Israeli Interior Minister the authority to expand the boundaries of any municipality by annexing new areas to it.

These laws and decisions aimed at expanding the boundaries of Jerusalem, on which the Israeli authorities previously announced to apply their laws, by annexing as many areas as possible from the surrounding lands whether from Jerusalem lands or Bethlehem. The Israeli authorities changed the lands'

boundaries that were well-defined following the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank by annexing lands from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and vice versa. After the end of the war, Israel annexed about 70,000 dunums from the West Bank lands to the areas within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem and applied the Israeli law in violation of the international law. The lands of al-Walajah village, which was under the jurisdiction of Bethlehem Governorate, were one of those lands. Thus, we cannot talk about targeting this village since the first day of the occupation of the West Bank in isolation from the Israeli settlement project in that area.

About al-Walajah Village:

Al-Walajah is a Palestinian village to the southwest of Jerusalem and north of Bethlehem. It was fully under the jurisdiction of the Bethlehem Governorate following the Jordanian Annexation of the West Bank before its occupation in 1967. The area of its original lands before the Nakbah in 1948 was about 17,708 dunums, but after the Nakbah, only 6,000 dunums were left for the Palestinians. Moreover, following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Israeli forces confiscated new areas of the village until only 3,000 dunums were left and divided into 3 administrations, including 60 dunums under the Palestinian Authority, 2400 dunums under the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Civil Administration of the West Bank, which is one of the Israeli authorities' arms in the West Bank. In 1948, the Israeli forces occupied most of the village lands and displaced the residents to the lands where the village is currently established. The origin of the current village residents goes to al-Walajah village residents, who were displaced from their land in 1948. The village is surrounded by the villages of al-Jourah, al-Malhah, Batir, Shorafat, al-Qubour, Ras Abu 'Ammar and 'Ouqour, Kherbat al-Louz and Beit Jala City. The al-Walajah village has a population of 3,000 residents.

Al-Walajah village has a UNRWA school, which provides education up to the ninth grade, so both female and male students receive their secondary education in the nearby villages or at the schools of Beit Jala and Bethlehem. In August 2017 and in cooperation with al-Walajah village council and GVC- the Civil Volunteer Group, UNRWA inaugurated a new kindergarten, which currently includes around 50 children, in al-Walajah village.

Al-Walajah village lacks the healthcare facilities as there are no governmental or private healthcare centers so patients receive medical treatment at the healthcare services in Bethlehem such as: al-Husein Governmental hospital, which is about 6 kilometers away from the abovementioned village; the Arab Society for Rehabilitation in Beit Jala, which is 4 kilometers away; and the UNRWA Clinic, which is 6 kilometers away. Al-Walajah is characterized by its fertile agricultural lands, water springs, almond, peach and olive trees, and the village has the oldest olive tree in Palestine. Today, the village has been surrounded with settlements and the annexation wall in addition to a military checkpoint near "*Har Gilo*" settlement, which has become the only outlet of the village from the western side. However, there are still some stone houses in the village's location.

Settlement Expansion in Bethlehem:

The beginning of the Israeli settlement in Bethlehem is back to the beginning of the occupation of the West bank. “Gush Etzion” settlement, which is today one of the largest clusters of settlements in the West Bank, was one of the first Israeli settlements that were established in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) after the June War in 1967. After that, the settlements spread in Bethlehem like other cities of the West Bank within a systematic policy and strategy to serve the Israeli aims, including the so-called “The Greater Jerusalem” Project.

‘Issa Zabboun, Director of the Information Systems Unit at the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ), mentioned that the Israeli forces only left for Bethlehem 18% of its total area that is part of the areas classified as “A” and “B” according to the 1993 Oslo Accords signed between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) while they seized the rest of the area in favor of settlements, military areas and bypass roads. Zaboun added that the Israeli Government increased the number of settlers to more than 70,000 in the settlements adjacent to Bethlehem. He also elaborated that from 1996 until 2007, Israel established 19 settlement outposts on the city lands and bypass roads that are 122 kilometers long, including already built roads and other roads to be built of an area of 12.3 square kilometers. Zaboun pointed out that the length of the annexation wall in the city is about 86.1 kilometers as it isolates about 160.7 square kilometers from the lands of the city and a number of western countryside villages.¹

1. <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?ID=940377>

Today, Bethlehem has become surrounded with settlements from all sides. In the southern side of the city, there is the cluster of *"Gush Etzion"* settlements, which was established by the Israeli authorities in 1967 and includes more than 22 settlements, being one of the largest clusters of settlements in the West Bank. In the eastern side of the city, the Israeli authorities established 3 settlements; the largest of which is *"Nokdim"* settlement that was established in 1977. In the northern side, there is *"Har Homa – Abu Ghunnaim Mount"* while in the northwest, there is *"Gilo"* settlement. These two settlements totally separate Jerusalem from Bethlehem in addition to the annexation wall that completely isolates the 2 abovementioned cities from each other.

Surrounding Settlements of al-Walajah Village:

Al-Walajah village is surrounded by “Gilo” and “Har Gilo” settlements as “Gilo” settlement is located to the south of Jerusalem and to the south of al-Walajah village. The construction of the settlement began in 1971 on the lands of al-Walajah, Beit Jala, Sharfat and Beit Safafa villages as the settlement occupies an area of 2738 dunums and is inhabited by 32,000 settlers. The settlement witnesses major expansions in the southern and western sides at the expense of Palestinian civilians’ lands. “Har Gilo” settlement is located in northwestern Bethlehem as it was established in 1972 on part of Beit Jala and al-Walajah. Today, the settlement occupies an area of 414 dunums and is inhabited by 1500 settlers. The Israeli authorities are establishing new housing units to expand “Har Gilo” settlement and establishing a network of bypass roads and tunnels to connect it with “Gilo” settlement and create a geographical connection between the settlements in the northern and southern Jerusalem at the expense of al-Walajah lands. The Israeli settlement plan aims at establishing a large settlement bloc in northern Bethlehem and southern Jerusalem and connecting “Har Gilo” settlement with “Gilo” settlement and then with “Givat Hamatos” and “Har Homa” settlements in order to establish this large settlement bloc at the expense of Palestinian lands in al-Walajah, Beit Jala, Shurfat and Beit Safafa villages.²

2.<http://www.dci.plo.ps/article/2225/%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A9---%D8%B5%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%85%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%B1>

Settlement Plans in al-Walajah Villages:

Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in **1967**, the successive Israeli governments adopted the policy of confiscating Palestinian lands in favor of Israeli settlements and military bases in addition to constructing bypass roads to connect the settlements with each other or allocate roads to be only used by settler, banning Palestinians from taking them. In al-Walajah Village alone, Around **137** dunums (2.3% of the total area of the village) were confiscated to establish “Gilo” and “Har Gilo” settlements.

With Reference to Oslo Accords, the lands of al-Walajah village were divided into Areas (B) and (C) as **113** dunums (**2.6%** of the village area) of the lands were classified as Area (B), which is under the Palestinian civil control but under the Israeli security control. Moreover, **4215** dunums of al-Walajah lands (**97.4%** of the total area) were classified as Area (C), which is under the full Israeli control as Palestinians are not allowed in any way to build on its lands nor benefit from them unless a permit is issued by the Israeli Civil Administration in Bethlehem. Area (C) includes agricultural lands, open spaces and small urban areas.³

3. ARIJ

The Annexation Wall in al-Walajah Village:

The route of the annexation wall in the village area passes through the West Bank areas and has changed several times since the declaration to build it. The original planning for the annexation wall included the village from the Israeli western side of the course by separating the village from Bethlehem, on which the residents of the village depend for all services and have ties with its other villages. The route was later amended to wind around the entire built-up area of the village by separating the agricultural lands from which. This route has created a barrier between the village and the nearby “*Har Gilo*” settlement and left the village with a single access road leading to the nearby Palestinian town of Beit Jala.

The annexation wall around al-Walajah will transform an agrarian village set among ancient agricultural terraces into a concrete cage that stifles any possi-



bility of development. The wall construction works have heavily damaged cultivated terraces, and once the wall is complete, the village farmers' access to their agricultural lands where they have worked for generations will be related to arrangements set by the Israeli forces at the agricultural gates. Although Israel built agricultural gates in the wall through which the residents could access their lands, the accumulated experience Although Israel has built 'agricultural gates' in the wall so that residents may reach their lands, past experience from other areas of the West Bank has shown that such arrangements generally enable only partial access to the lands, and at times access is completely prohibited. Furthermore, the checkpoint to be erected at the entrance to the village will affect the residents' freedom of movement and, as a result, violate their rights to work, education, medical care and family ties.⁴

After a 3-year cession of the construction works in the annexation wall around al-Walajah village in April 2017, the Israeli forces resumed the construction works in the annexation wall, which will surround the village from all its sides and separate between it and the lands of occupied Jerusalem. Over the last few years, several legal battles have been waged against erecting this part of the wall there, particularly to prevent damaging ancient terraces which go down from the village's side towards al-Walajah Valley and its agricultural lands. According to the plan, the annexation wall will surround al-Walajah village from all sides and will separates the village from most of its lands (about 3000 dunums) which are located on the cliffs leading to the valley. It is expected that many of these lands will become part of Jerusalem's new urban park in addition to al-Heneya Spring, which will become an entrance point and major attraction in the park. It should be noted that the spring so far serves the village's residents and shepherds for watering their flocks.

4. https://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier/20130624_hajajleh_family_isolated_in_al_walajah

The latest settlement projects in Al Walajah:

On 04 September 2018, the District Planning and Building Committee issued a decision of a plan to establish around **4700** settlement units on the lands of al-Walajah village. Activist Ibrahim 'Awadallah said that according to documents and schemes received from the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), a plan was announced for the establishment of settlement units on lands rich in archaeological sites, groundwater and springs. The plan will be carried out on an area of **841** dunums, including a protected accommodation, hotels, a trade area and other facilities. The Palestinian activist added that the targeted land includes **23** water springs, and their owners have the necessary evidential papers; thus, they have the right to challenge the decision. He noted that the Israeli plan is part of the settlement expansion in light of a project for the young Jewish couples at the expense of the Palestinian territory.⁵

Israel's separation plan represented in the construction of the wall had a negative and devastating impact on al-Walajah village. Upon the latest update of route of the wall published in April 2007 on the Israeli Ministry of Defense's website, it turned out that the length of the wall will extend to 3.6 kilometers on the lands of al-Walajah village. Moreover, as soon as the construction of the wall will be finished, 4209 dunums will be isolated and confiscated (97% of the total area of the village.) Those dunums are mostly

5. <https://www.qudspress.com/index.php?page=show&id=47227>

agriculture lands, forests and open spaces. Furthermore, Gilo and Har Gilo settlements will be annexed to Israel. The annexation wall will surround the village from the northern, eastern and western sides while regarding southern side, there is a security street under the Israeli forces' control adjacent to Bypass Road 436, which is the only outlet for the village residents towards the service center in Bethlehem. Further, the southern side of al-Walajah village will also be surrounded with a 4.5km long wall adjacent to the Bypass Road 436. The wall's sides will be protected with trenches and barbed wires that are about 80-100 meters wide. In general, the wall will separate the village from all the other Palestinian villages in the western countryside and the main cities in Bethlehem.

On 14 November 2017, Israeli forces handed al-Walajah village's residents notices informing them that 'Ain Ya'il checkpoint, located on the road between Jerusalem and "Har Gilo" settlement, will be moved 2.5 km towards the Palestinian territories. As a result, the Palestinians who do not hold the Jerusalem ID cards will be denied access to the spring and the nearby agricultural areas. Moreover, on 16 November 2017, the Israeli authorities declared their intention to move the checkpoint to the west of the city towards the Palestinian territories. Thus, large areas of these lands will be annexed to the settlement projects, including the area where al-Heneya Spring is located, which is the largest spring in western Jerusalem. Haaretz published a report reviewing that the Israeli Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee informed al-Walja village's residents in the southern side of city that the committee is willing to move the checkpoint towards the Palestinian territories. Thus, the area where al-Heneyah Spring is located will be moved from the Palestinian side to the Israeli side and will be part of the Jerusalem Metropolitan Park.

As reported in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Israel's response to the petition filed by al-Walajah residents against relocation of the checkpoint adjacent to their village shows that announcing to move the checkpoint was illegal. The Jerusalem Municipality started to work on moving 'Ain Ya'el checkpoint 1.5 kilo meters away to the west, denying al-Walajah residents' access to al-Haneyah Spring. The permit to move the checkpoint was issued by the planner for the Jerusalem District Committee, Shira Talmi, signed the permit in her capacity as the chair of the Security Installations Committee, which approves the security installations' schemes. However, Israel's response to the petition showed that Talmi is neither the chair of the committee nor a member of it. Moreover, the committee, with the participation of one authorized member who is the representative of the security service, had deliberations in violation of the procedures. Despite those flaws, the State asked the District Court in Jerusalem to continue its work. In its response, the State said, "Practically, none of petitioners' fundamental rights were affected," while the State Attorney Moran Bar Owen, from the Israeli Prosecutor Office, said, "Talmi's status could be settled in few days." Attorney Ghiath Nasser, who filed the petition on behalf of the Walaja residents, rejected the state's arguments and said, *"I think that what happened in this case is a scandal. I don't think that this is a fault that can be repaired."* he added, *"What we have here essentially is a hearing before a single member of a committee, a representative of the defense minister. The role of the court is to champion the principle of the rule of law and explain that this isn't how it's done."*⁶

Hassan Burijah, a member of the Colonization and Wall Commission in Bethlehem, emphasized that lately the Israeli forces have intensively targeted al-Walajah village. He

6. <http://poica.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Firstquart2018.pdf>

added that they are carrying out a huge settlement campaign against al-Walajah village, aiming at subjugating the village as it is one last obstacle in facing the great settlement enterprise, which threatens the West Bank and Occupied Jerusalem. Thus, the village is continuously being targeted by the Israeli forces upon a political decision to take over the village and cut Jerusalem's ties with its Palestinian identity. In addition, he mentioned that Israel considers al-Walajah as an integral part of Jerusalem. As a result, most of the plans and schemes have paved the way for initiating new settlement projects to connect "Gush Etzion" settlement cluster, south of Bethlehem, with West Jerusalem, via bypass roads, tunnels and a railway to facilitate the movement of "Gush Etzion's" settlers to Jerusalem through western and southern countryside areas of Bethlehem, starting from "Etzion", Jaba'a, Nahalin, Husan, Battir and ending with al-Walajah, north of Bethlehem.⁷

7. <https://www.alghad.tv>

House Demolitions:

At approximately 04:00 on Wednesday, 28 March 2018, under the pretext of building without a license, the Israeli municipality crews via its bulldozers demolished an under-construction house, a retaining wall and 'Abed Rabboh Cemetery in 'Ein Jwaiza in al-Walajah village, west of Bethlehem. Majdi Abu al-Teen, a member of al-Walajah village council, reported that Israeli forces moved into al-Walajah village, closed the entrance to 'Ein Jwaiza, north of the village, and started to demolish 10 empty graves belonging to 'Abed Rabboh family; a retaining wall for an agriculture land belonging to Tariq Mahameed; and the foundations of a 180-square-meter under construction house belonging to Nader Abu Khirah.



Mohammed Mousa 'Abed Rabboh, the caretaker of 'Abed Rabboh cemetery, said that the family was surprised with the demolition of the graves and headed to the cemetery. However, the Israeli forces prevented them from reaching it until the completion of the demolition. He also said that Jerusalem Municipality's vehicles demolished 10 graves in a land belonging to Daghash family and this case is pending in the Israeli court. He pointed out that in Daghash's land, there are the graves of Abdallah Daghash and Youssof al-'Alary, who were both killed and buried in the same land in 1952. The caretaker added that the family cut 250 square meters from the land in order to establish a cemetery next to the two graves and then established 10 big graves with covers two months ago. He elaborated that the Israeli Interior Ministry officers arrived at the cemetery and handed an order that bans the construction works. They then headed to the village council the family and sent the order to attorney Ghiath Nasser, to handle the legal follow-up. Mohammed 'Abed Rabboh said that a hearing was held in the court where the Israeli Interior Ministry ordered 'Abed Rabboh family to pay a fine of 15,000 shekels and to obtain a license for the cemetery, but then the trial was adjourned. It should be noted that 'Ain Jweizah is one of al-Waljah's neighborhoods that has been under the control of Jerusalem Municipality since 1999 as the neighborhood has a population of 500 persons. Moreover, the Municipality of Jerusalem has demolished houses in the neighborhood and handed others house demolition orders.

On Monday dawn, 03 September 2018, Israeli bulldozers demolished four houses and one caravan in al-Walajah village under the pretext of non-licensing, displacing 32 persons. As a result, clashes broke out between the Israeli forces and the houses' owners along with the village's residents who protested in the village against the demolitions.

Those clashes resulted in the injury of 6 civilians with rubber-coated metal bullets and taking them to the hospital for medical treatment.

Activist Ibrahim 'Awadallh said to a PCHR's fieldworker that an Israeli force moved into Khelet al-Samak and 'Ain Jweizah areas in al-Walajah village the day before and handed four houses belonging to Hanan Mohammed al-Razem, Khaled Mahmoud Abu Khyara, 'Alaa Hussain Hajajla, and Ahmed Ali Abu al-Teen, house demolition notices. It should be mentioned that these houses were previously notified to be demolished.

Ibrahim 'Awadallh also mentioned that Israeli forces threatened houses' owners to either demolish their houses or the municipality will at the owners' expense. He added that Israeli forces backed by bulldozers came back and moved into the village at 04:00 on the abovementioned day and started to level four houses and an agricultural caravan despite though the village residents were in them. During clashes that broke out in the village due to the the demolitions, the Israeli forces fired tear gas canisters, sound bombs, and rubber-coated metal bullets. As a result, 6 civilians sustained rubber bullet wounds and dozen others fainted or suffocated after teargas inhalation. It should be mentioned that Israeli forces demolished 2 houses in 'Ain Jweizah: one of them belonged to Khaled Mahmoud Abu Khyara and was 200 square meters, sheltering 11 family members and the other one belonged to Hanan al-Razem and is 130 square meters, sheltering 7 family members. The Israeli bulldozers also demolished a house belonging to Ahmed 'Ali Abu al-Teen that is 100 square meters, sheltering 7 family members and another house belonging to 'Alaa Hussain Hajajlah, sheltering 7 family members. Both houses were in Khelet

al-Samak area and dozens of civilians protested in them in order to confront the Israeli bulldozers. In the same context, the Israeli military vehicles removed a caravan belonging to Shqairat family from the village.

On 10 September 2018, Ahmed Abu al-Teen's family started to self-demolish their house in al-Walajah village following pressures by the Municipality of Jerusalem. It should be noted that bulldozers belonging to the Municipality of Jerusalem demolished part of Abu Teen's house last week and ordered him to complete the demolition to avoid paying high fines.



Demolition Orders:

- » On 14 December 2017, Israeli forces handed an administrative demolition order to Khaled Abu Khiyarah under the pretext of non-licensing. The Israeli authorities gave Khaled only 15 days to appeal against the demolition order of his 120-square-meter house.
- » On 04 May 2018, the Israeli authorities notified of stopping the construction works in a house and demolishing a retaining wall in al-Walajah village, west of Bethlehem, under the pretext of non-licensing. Ibrahim 'Awadallah, a youth activist in the village, said that the Israeli authorities notified 'Isaa al-Atrash to stop the construction work in his 120-square-meter house, which is located in 'Ain Jweizah area, north-east of the village, in addition to demolishing a retaining wall surrounding an agricultural land, which belonged to another person. Ibrahim 'Awadallah pointed out that 'Ain Jweizah has been lately and intensively targeted by the Israeli forces, including house demolitions, land-leveling and notices to stop construction works under the pretext of non-licensing, in order to seize lands and annex them to Jerusalem's municipal boundaries.
- » On 31 July 2018, the Israeli authorities notified 6 houses of demolition in al-Walajah village. Local sources said that a large force of Israeli soldiers moved into 'Ain Jweizah area, north of the village, and handed the owners of 6 houses demolition notices under the pretext of non-licens-

ing. The same sources pointed out that the Israeli forces handed the notified houses' owners notices to refer to the Israeli Municipality in Jerusalem in order to interrogate them about how they built their houses. It should be noted that the Israeli forces escalated their attacks against 'Ain Jweizah area, which is adjacent to Jerusalem, over the last months and against its residents and their property. The escalation affected 22 houses either by demolition or stopping their construction works in addition to demolishing many retaining walls and leveling lands. It should be noted that there are still 80 houses threatened of demolition or stopping construction works in them.

- » On 02 August 2017, the Israeli authorities handed the village residents 13 demolition notices for houses and facilities in 'Ain Jweizah area in al-Walajah village. The notices included 9 houses and gave their owners only few days to challenge before the Israeli court. Local sources stated that those houses are located within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. The local sources at the time added that those notices, which were preceded by dozens of notices, aim at completing the construction of the annexation wall, implementing settlement plans, including so-called "Jerusalem Metropolitan Park" near 'Ain al-Henyah, in addition to the relocation of the military checkpoint "al-Walajah Checkpoint" 1.5 kilometers in the lands of the village's residents.

Conclusion:

1. The Israeli authorities have targeted al-Walajah village since its occupation by confiscating large areas of lands in favor of settlement enterprise. This was represented in building “Gilo” and “Har Gilo” settlements on parts of its lands.
2. The Israeli authorities continued to confiscate al-Walajah village’s lands under various pretexts, such as building settlement roads, establishing railways, establishing “Jerusalem Metropolitan Park,” and building the annexation wall on parts of its agricultural and pastoral lands.
3. The Israeli authorities imposed a policy to tighten the screws on al-Walajah village’s residents; the majority of them holds blue ID cards and pays Arnona tax, by demolishing houses and civilian facilities. The Israeli authorities also refused to approve a structural plan for the village, which aims at reducing urban sprawl and building houses to meet the needs of the population growth in the village.
4. The village is subject to frequent incursions, establishment of military checkpoints on its streets, and abuse of its residents by stopping their cars at these checkpoints, searching them provocatively and checking the ID cards of the passengers.
5. The village lacks many basic services such as education, health and others services.

Recommendations:

1. PCHR affirms that East Jerusalem, including its villages and Palestinian refugee camps, is an occupied territory, and all the measures taken by the Israeli authorities following the occupation of the city in 1967 do not change its legal status as occupied territory.
2. PCHR calls upon the United Nations to ensure protection for the Palestinian civilians and their private and public property in the occupied Palestinian territory in general and in East Jerusalem and its suburbs in particular.
3. PCHR calls upon the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions to ensure that Israel, as a State party to these Conventions, fulfills its obligations and apply the Geneva Conventions in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in occupied East Jerusalem and its suburbs.
4. PCHR calls upon UNESCO to take action to stop the serious violations against al- Walajah village and its Arab and human heritage, especially that it is full of archaeological sites.

PCHR Issues Special Report about al-Walajah Village

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights issued a special report about the violations against al-Walajah village, located in the southwestern Jerusalem and northern Bethlehem, suffers. The report reviews the procedures that the Israeli forces started to implement since the occupation of the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem in terms of issuing legislations aiming at imposing the Israeli law, confiscating lands, and establishing colonization projects in order to annex it to Israel.

The report, entitled “al-Walaja Village Under Settlement and Isolation” reviews the expansion of settlement projects in Bethlehem which has begun since the occupation of the West Bank. Moreover, it referred to “*Gush Etzion*” settlement, which is one of the largest and the first settlements established on the Palestinian territory after 1967 war.

The report mentioned the settlements surrounding al-Walaja Village, which are “Gilo”, “Har Gilo”, “Jef’at Hamatos”, and “Har Homah” which were established on the Palestinian civilian lands in al-Walaja, Beit Jala, Sharafat, and Beit Safafa villages. The report affirmed that the Israeli authorities targeted al-Walaja village since it has been occupied after confiscating some of its areas for the sake of settlement projects under different pretexts such as road, railway line, national park, and the apartheid wall construction. The authorities used the harassing policy against the Palestinian civilians hold-

ing the Israeli ID cards and paying Arnona tax. This policy includes large-scale demolition of houses and other civilian facilities. Moreover, this policy is accompanied with the authorities' refusal to approve a structural plan for the village to reduce urban expansion housing construction to meet the needs of the population development in the village.