



RIGHT TO THE CITY UNDER OCCUPATION THE CASE OF PALESTINE Webinar

Background

Since cities are both the showcases and catalysts of national or global developments, industrialization and market-oriented new economic models emerging in the Western Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were experienced intensely by cities and their inhabitants. The concept of "Right to the city" was coined in this regard by Henri Lefebvre in 1967 in his book *Le Droit à la Ville* in which he discussed the inequities, disparities and exclusions in the new urban life and made a strong case for an inclusive urban life, offering well-being, dignity and participation opportunity for all.

The concept has gained a wider context and recognition over time beyond Lefebvre's special emphasis on the economy. Along with exploitive economic structures, there are other socio-political challenges that have direct adverse impact on urban life, generating dangerous social fault lines by excluding certain parts of the society. The term now refers to standing against all the barriers to achieve an inclusive society. Following international documents have been developed to ensure the right to the city: **European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City** (Saint-Denis / France, 2000), **World Charter of the Rights of the City** (Barcelona / Spain, 2004), **Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities** (Montreal / Canada, 2006), **Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City** (Mexico City / Mexico, 2010), **Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City** (Florence / Italy, 2011), **Gwangju Human Rights Charter** (Gwangju / Korea, 2012) , **New Urban Agenda** (Quito / Ecuador, 2016).

Palestine has been always a quite relevant case for the debate on right to the city. Following to First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman authority in Middle East, British-French protectorates and mandates were formed as the proto nation states for Arab territories. *The Mandate for Palestine* was one of them, yet the increasing Jewish population in the region that had been steadily migrating to Palestine since the early 20th century posed a challenge to create an independent Arab nation state there, and by the Resolution 181 of UN General Assembly in 1947, the territory was divided between Arab and Jewish population. Arab population that considered the resolution unfair and biased against Arabs declined the partition plan.



The crisis of Palestine that has military, diplomatic, demographic, religious and economic aspects is still unsolved and getting worse notably in terms of its humanitarian dimension as the State of Israel has been creating illegal “settlements” in Arab territories, forcibly evicting residents from their homes, harshly limiting mobilization of Palestinian inhabitants, preventing Arab population from accessing basic and religious services, and blockading enclaves. Recent violence and conflict in East Jerusalem and Gaza, which was ignited in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood after Israeli attempts to evict Palestinians from their homes, are the reflections of this long-standing and chronic crisis, and Israel's disregard of the UN resolutions.

This crisis has found a significant place in the agendas of UCLG and UCLG-MEWA. UCLG World Council's [Motion of Jerusalem in 2017](#) firmly expressed that the rights of the Palestinian people should be upheld and comprehensive solutions should be sought. As a follow-up to the Motion, in 2018, [UCLG Motion on Escalation of Conflict between Palestine and Israel](#) was adopted in Strasbourg. More recently, UCLG Presidency released a [statement](#) which calls for respecting the rights of the civilian population as well as protecting their lives. Moreover, UCLG-MEWA stressed ‘the right to the city’ in its quarterly Newsletter dedicated to “[Cities for All: Right to the City and Settlements](#)” in 2018 with a specific reference to the Habitat agenda. In this issue, global context regarding the right to the city was discussed within the context of Palestine.

Although Palestine's national-level political structure is contested and ambiguous, its long-standing local governments are relatively well-organized and traced back to the 19th century administrative reforms of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, local governments and their representatives are on the front line as the occupation expands and strengthens its existence within Palestine.

The challenges Arab communities and local governments in Palestine have been facing demonstrate that the right to the city is a must, not an option. Yet, the right to the city of Palestinians have been violated continuously by Israel. Within this context, ensuring the well-being and equal participation in urban life of Palestinian communities stand as a significant task before the international community. This webinar aims to examine the humanitarian crisis in Palestine through the lenses of the local on the basis of the right to the city. Two special sessions will give the local representatives and experts the opportunity to present and discuss the impact of the occupation on the daily lives of the people.



DRAFT AGENDA

23 June 2021

13:30 – 15:30 (GMT +3) / ZOOM

Languages: Turkish, Arabic, English, French, Spanish (Simultaneous translation)

13:30 – 13:50 Opening

- Mehmet Duman, **Secretary General**, UCLG-MEWA
- Mohamed Saadie, **President**, UCLG-MEWA
- Mohamed Boudra, **President**, UCLG (TBC)
- Mousa Hadid, **President**, APLA ; **Co-President**, UCLG-MEWA Committee on City Diplomacy and Local Governance
- Dr. Erfan Ali, **Regional Representative**, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States

➤ 13:50 – 14:40 SESSION I: RIGHT TO STAY AND FREE MOVEMENT

This session will deal with Israel's policy of illegal settlements, evictions of Palestinians from their own homes and lands, attempts to de-Arabize Palestine by different kinds of expulsion. Also, it will stress the restricted mobilization of Palestinian.

Moderator & Key Note Speaker: (TBD)

- Mohammed Hussein, *Mufti of Jerusalem and Holy Lands*, **Jerusalem**
- Issam Faroun, *Mayor*, **Al-Azarieh (Bethany) Municipality**
- Taisir Abu Senena, *Mayor*, **Al Khalil (Hebron) Municipality** (TBC)

Wrap-Up and Q&A

➤ 14:40 – 15:30 SESSION II: RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

This session will deal with the city planning, provision of and access to basic services under occupation as these are strictly hindered by Israel.

Moderator & Key Note Speaker: Ahmad El-Atrash, *Senior Urban Programme Officer*, UN-Habitat

- Mousa Hadid, *Mayor*, **Ramallah Municipality**
- Yehya Al Sarraj, *Mayor*, **Gaza Municipality** (TBC)
- Azem Haj Mohammed, *Village Council*, **Froush Beit Dajan**

Wrap-Up and Q&A