Oral Statement by Human Rights Watch, UN Human Rights Council Item 7 General Debate: High Commissioner Should Immediately Release Settlement Business Database

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Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/23/high-commissioner-should-immediately-release-settlement-business-database>

Three and-a-half years have passed since this body passed without opposition resolution 31/36 mandating the establishment of a database of businesses facilitating Israeli settlements and two and-a-half years since the initial deadline for publishing it. The High Commissioner pledged in March that she would fulfil the mandate “within coming months.” The prolonged delay in complying with a council resolution is without precedent.

During the last session, some 90 states, in two joint statements, highlighted the importance of the High Commissioner impartially and credibly carrying out Council mandates. Doing so in this case would highlight the Council’s firm rejection of the Israeli government’s efforts to expand and entrench its illegal settlement enterprise and business activities, which fuel rights abuses. The UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar recently released a list of businesses facilitating rights abuses against the Rohingya, without fuss, drama, or delay. They just got the job done. The High Commissioner should release the data before the end of this Council session, lest it become an issue of credibility for both the High Commissioner and the Council itself.

Tomorrow, the Israeli Supreme Court will hear our appeal of a deportation order against our Israel and Palestine Director, Omar Shakir, over our human rights advocacy. Israel has caricatured our call on companies to stop doing business in settlements, in order to avoid contributing to rights abuses, as “promoting boycotts,” and sought to deport our researcher from the country. These attempts to stifle critique should be a concern for all delegations who care about democracy, human rights and freedom of expression in Israel. Amnesty International recently joined the appeal, citing potential ramifications for them and other rights groups. How the Supreme Court rules and a likely new government in Israel acts will shape the country’s openness to those who challenge its policies towards Palestinians. We encourage states to raise directly and publicly their concerns about the deportation order and larger crackdown on human rights defenders in Israel and Palestine.