



A UN human rights rapporteur has said continued settlement construction will probably make Israel's occupation of Palestinian land irreversible. Richard Falk said the peace process aimed at creating an independent, sovereign Palestinian state therefore appeared to be based on an illusion.

He said the UN, the US and Israel had failed to uphold Palestinians' rights. Israeli officials said Mr Falk's report on the Palestinian territories was biased and served a political agenda.

Nearly half a million Jews live in more than 100 settlements built since Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They are held to be illegal under international law, although Israel disputes this 'De-facto annexation'

In a report for the UN General Assembly, Mr Falk said Jewish settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem had become so extensive it amounted to de-facto annexation of Palestinian land.

He said this undercut assumptions behind UN Security Council resolutions which said Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory in 1967 was temporary and reversible. Such assumptions are the basis for the current peace process aimed at creating an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

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