



Practicing Responsible Business in Occupied Territories

Wednesday, 16 November – 11:40-13:00 – Room: XXII

Organized by Human Rights Watch

Moderator

Sarah Saadoun, Business and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch. Author of Human Rights Watch report "Occupation, Inc.: How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israeli Violations of Palestinian Rights" and Harvard International Review article "Responsible Business in Occupied Territory."

Speakers

Annie Bersagel, Advisor on Responsible Investments, KLP. KLP is a Norwegian life insurance company and pension fund that regularly engages with companies active in occupied territories on the challenge of respecting international human rights and humanitarian law.

Dalit Baum, PhD, Director of Economic Activism, American Friends Service Committee. Corporate researcher and CSR strategist, co-founder of Who Profits from the Israeli Occupation and of the Investigate database.

Marya Farah, Legal Research and Advocacy Officer, Al-Haq. Al Haq is the premier Palestinian human rights organization and has published a series of reports investigating Israeli and foreign business interests in Palestine.

Erik Hagen, Board Member, Western Sahara Resource Watch. Hagen has researched Moroccan and international business activities in Western Sahara for the last 15 years, both from NGO perspective and as an investigative journalist.

Peter Webster, CEO, EIRIS Foundation. The EIRIS Foundation last year launched the public Investment in Occupied Lands database which lists companies active in Palestine and Crimea to encourage discussion amongst investors and others on the legal and corporate responsibility challenges of operating in such territories.

Panel Goals

Companies operating in occupied territories are increasingly facing public pressure due to their activities. But their responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are not always clear, particularly in light of the application of international humanitarian law. For example, companies, investors, and activists often have divergent views on the rules governing natural resources and settlements, or lack a principled position altogether.

This panel, organized by Human Rights Watch, brings together a range of stakeholders who have practical experience assessing corporate activity in occupied territories for compliance with human rights. Its goal will be to set out each panelist's position on key issues with a view to bridging differences and developing a consistent and coherent approach to recommendation for companies. Panelists will draw on case studies from a number of situations of occupation, including Western Sahara, Palestine, and Iraq under the US-led Coalition, to enrich the discussion. Discussion topics will include:

- What are the major human rights risks for businesses operating in occupied territories?
- What limitations does international humanitarian law place on resource extraction and settlement activity?
- What is the scope of responsibility for businesses, including with respect to financing activities in occupied territories, operating there, and trading with public or private actors located there?
- What can businesses do to avoid or mitigate any contribution to violations of international humanitarian law or human rights by the occupying power?
- What have businesses or occupying powers successfully done in the past to ensure compliance with their responsibilities?

Useful links

Sarah Saadoun, "Responsible Business in Occupied Territory," Harvard International Review: <http://hir.harvard.edu/responsible-business-occupied-territories/>

Human Rights Watch, "Occupation, Inc.: How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israeli Violations of Palestinian Rights": <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/19/occupation-inc/how-settlement-businesses-contribute-israels-violations-palestinian>

American Friends Service Committee, Investigate Database: <http://investigate.afsc.org/>

EIRIS, Investment in Occupied Lands: Crimea and Palestine Database: <http://www.businessinoccupiedlands.org/>

Who Profits?, Database of companies profiting from the Israeli Occupation: <http://www.whoprofits.org/>

KLP, Corporate Social Responsibility: Exclusion and Dialogue: <http://english.klp.no/about-klp/corporate-responsibility/exclusion-and-dialogue>

Western Sahara Resource Watch: <http://www.wsrw.org/>

Al-Haq, Housing, Land and Natural Resources: <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/housing-land-and-natural-resources>