

PUBLIC

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UA 139/09 House demolition/Forced Eviction/ Access to Water

ISRAEL/ Over 280 residents of Ras al-Ahmar and Hadidiya villages
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (OPT)

On 4 June, the Israeli army destroyed the homes of 18 Palestinian families (more than 130 people, many of them children) and their animal pens in the hamlet of Ras al-Ahmar, in the Jordan Valley area of the West Bank in the OPT. The Israeli army confiscated the water storage tank that the villagers rely on as well as the tractor and trailer that they use to bring water to the village. The villagers are now without shelter or source of water during a season of high temperatures.

There is a water-well close to the village which only Israeli settlers are allowed to use. The villagers rely on their tractor and trailer to be able to bring water from various sources, up to 20km from the village, for their survival.

Five other families in the nearby hamlet of Hadidiya are under threat of immediate eviction and at least 12 other families are fighting eviction and demolition orders before an Israeli military court, with little chance of success. In total more than 150 people, most of them children, risk losing their home and being evicted from the area.

Some of these families have had their homes destroyed multiple times in recent years and all of them face the prospect of further displacement because the Israeli army has been increasing its decades-old efforts to force local Palestinian communities out of large areas of the Jordan Valley, most of which it has designated as a "closed military area". It has denied them access to water, further restricted their movements and put their livelihoods at risk by confiscating their animals. After each previous demolition the families have rebuilt their homes in either the same place or nearby but they are now finding it increasingly difficult to survive in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Though they are very isolated, the villagers are determined to remain in the area where they have lived since long before the Israeli army occupied the OPT in 1967. They have welcomed international solidarity and pressure on the Israeli authorities to protest the demolitions. However, as international attention diminishes, the threat to the villagers' increases and renewed action now is crucial.

For years Israel has pursued a policy of discriminatory house demolition, allowing scores of Israeli settlements, illegal under international law, to be built on occupied Palestinian land, while confiscating Palestinian lands, refusing building permits for Palestinians and destroying their homes. The land vacated has often been used to build illegal Israeli settlements. International law forbids occupying powers from settling their own citizens in the territories they occupy. Palestinians, especially Palestinian villagers in the Jordan Valley, have suffered particular pressure. Most of the Jordan Valley area of the occupied West Bank has been declared a "closed military area" by the Israeli army or has been taken over by some 36 Israeli settlements.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Hebrew or your own language:

- condemning the demolition of the homes and animal pens and the confiscation of the villagers' water tank and tractor in Ras al-Ahmar;
- urging that all pending demolition and eviction orders against Palestinians in Hadidiya and nearby areas be immediately rescinded;
- calling on the authorities to place a moratorium on house demolitions and forced evictions in the West Bank until the law is amended to bring it into line with international standards;
- calling for the restrictions imposed on the Palestinian villagers in the Jordan Valley to be lifted, in particular for them to have access to water, electricity and other essential services, and for them to be allowed to move freely within the Jordan Valley, and between there and the rest of the West Bank;
- calling for responsibility for planning and building regulations in the Jordan Valley and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be removed from the Israeli military authorities and placed solely with the local Palestinian communities.

APPEALS TO:

Ehud Barak
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia
Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

Brigadier General Avihai Mandelblit
Military Judge Advocate General
6 David Elazar Street
Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: +972 3 608 0366, +972 3 569 4526
Email: arbel@mail.idf.il, avimn@idf.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Judge Advocate General

Major General Gadi Shamni
Commander, West Bank
GOC Central Command
Military Post 01149
Battalion 877, Israel Defense Forces
Israel

Fax: +972 2 530 5741, +972 2 530 5724
Salutation: Dear Major General Shamni

COPIES TO:

Tony Blair

Quartet Representative to the Middle East
The Office of Tony Blair
P.O. Box 60519
London, W2 7JU
United Kingdom

Email: info@tonyblairoffice.org
Salutation: Dear Mr Blair

And diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 July.