### Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Homes

**The Facts**

- An estimated 48,488 Palestinian structures have been intentionally demolished by Israel since 1967.
- Throughout 2015, Israeli Civil Administration demolished 125 Palestinian homes, leaving 496 Palestinians homeless, including 287 minors.
- These home demolitions have increased significantly this year—from January 2016 to the end of June, 168 Palestinian homes were demolished in the West Bank, leaving 740 Palestinians homeless, including 384 minors.
- On July 26th, in the span of 24 hours, over 30 Palestinian families were made homeless by home demolitions.
- The above figures do not include homes demolished as a form of collective punishment against the families of those Palestinians who have carried out attacks on Israelis, which have also significantly increased since October 2015.
- Nor do they include the approximately 100,000 homes destroyed during the 2014 War on Gaza, which continues to affect more than 600,000 people.
- Most intentional home demolitions are carried out in small, underprivileged communities located far from Palestinian population centres; primarily in the Jordan Valley, the South Hebron Hills, and East Jerusalem.
- In the past two years, over 200 EU-funded buildings have been demolished; the majority being buildings that provide Palestinians with basic needs such as food, hygiene, and electricity.
- The demolition of EU-funded buildings has increased 689% over the last year.
- Robert Piper, UN Coordinator for Humanitarian assistance and Development Aid for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, said that “most of the demolitions in the West Bank take place on the spurious legal grounds that Palestinians do not possess building permits, but, in Area C, official Israeli figures indicate only 1.5% of Palestinian permit applications are approved in any case. So what legal options are left for a law-abiding Palestinian?”
- This can be contrasted with the Israeli government system of subsidies and other policies to actively promote the building of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

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1. Embassy of the State of Palestine
2. Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Homes has increased significantly in 2016

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International Law

- The Fourth Geneva Convention states that “any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the state, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited.”
- Israeli home demolition policies may also constitute “inhuman acts” as defined in Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as a violation of the UN Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973.

Analysis

- In the face of becoming homeless and the almost impossibility of receiving an Israeli permit to build on their own land, Palestinians often build without such permits.
- The motivation for Israel to demolish unpermitted Palestinian homes is political: to elicit the “quiet transfer” of Palestinian residents of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), ethnically cleansing the area to allow further illegal settlement expansion, to ultimately annex these areas.
- The Israeli institutionalised system of racial discrimination to ethnically cleanse and “unite” Jerusalem: expropriate land; prevent town planning for Palestinian neighborhoods; force Palestinian residents to build homes without a permit; demolish these homes, forcing the residents to move into homes outside of the city; and then revoke their residency, ensuring that they can never return to live in Jerusalem.
- Demolitions constitute a huge financial blow to the residents, who are often given fines of $15,000-20,000, despite the fact that many of them earn around $500 a month.
- The human suffering entailed in the destruction of a family’s home is incalculable.
- The international support (including from the Australian public and officials) shown for the Australian-funded Palestinian village of Susiya caused a freeze on the demolition of the village. This evidences the potential power of international pressure to stop home demolitions.
References

3. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
13. Schaeffer, Halper and Epshtain, “Israel’s Policy of Demolishing Palestinian Homes Must End”.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

For more information:

**Embassy:** 2/44 Dalman Crescent, O’Malley ACT 2606
**Mailing Address:** PO Box 4646 Kingston ACT Australia 2604
**Telephone:** 62869193
**Fax:** 62869405
**Email:** palestinian.delegation@bigpond.com, auemb@mofa.pna.ps