



Embassy of the State of Palestine

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific

Fact Sheet / August 3 - 2016

Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Homes

The Facts

- An estimated 48,488 Palestinian structures have been intentionally demolished by Israel since 1967¹
- Throughout 2015, Israeli Civil Administration demolished 125 Palestinian homes, leaving 496 Palestinians homeless, including 287 minors²
- 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 minors³
- On July 26th, in the span of 24 hours, over 30 Palestinian families were made homeless by home demolitions⁴
- 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 2015⁵
- Nor do they include the approximately 100,000 homes destroyed during the 2014 War on Gaza, which continues to affect more than 600,000 people⁶
- 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 Jerusalem⁷
- 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 electricity⁸
- The demolition of EU-funded buildings has increased 689% over the last year⁹
- 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?”¹⁰
- 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 Bank¹¹

Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes has increased significantly in 2016

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”¹²
- This home demolition also violates the human right to adequate housing enshrined in: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Art. 25(1)); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (Art. 11); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (Art. 17); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1969 (Art. 5(e)(iii)); the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990 (Arts. 16, 27); and General Comments 4 (1991) and 7 (1997) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.¹³
- 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 1973¹⁴

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 permits¹⁵
- 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 areas¹⁶
- 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 Jerusalem¹⁷
- 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 month¹⁸
- 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.¹⁹

These demolitions are illegal under International Law

The best approach to halting these illegal demolitions is applying international pressure

References

1. "Get the Facts," *Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions* (2 August, 2016), available from: <http://icahd.org/>
2. "Israel demolished more Palestinian homes in the West Bank in the first half of 2016 than in all of 2015," *B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories* (27 July, 2016), available from: http://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20160727_house_demolitions_in_area_c
3. Ibid.
4. "PLO Secretary-General Dr. Saeb Erekat on Continued Israeli Demolitions of Palestinian Homes and Properties," *Negotiations Affairs Department – State of Palestine* (26 July, 2016), available from: <https://www.nad.ps/en/media-room/press-releases/plo-secretary-general-dr-saeb-erekat-continued-israeli-demolitions>
5. "House Demolitions as Punishment," *B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories* (21 April, 2016), available from: http://www.btselem.org/punitive_demolitions/20160421_149_left_homless_hundreds_threatened
6. "UN Agency Ramps up for Gaza Reconstruction Push," *United Nations News Centre* (19 October, 2014), available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49118#.V6Aq6o9OKUm>
7. Emily Shaeffer, Jeff Halper and Itay Epshtain, "Israel's Policy of Demolishing Palestinian Homes Must End," *Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions* (2012), available from: <http://icahd.org/get-the-facts/analysis/>
8. Amira Hass, "Israel Dramatically Ramping Up Demolitions of Palestinian Homes in West Bank," *Haaretz* (21 February, 2016), available from: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.704391>
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Mya Guarnieri, "Israeli Settlers Lured by Subsidies," *Al Jazeera* (24 August, 2012), available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/08/201282211420708214.html>
12. "Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War," *Diplomatic Conference in Geneva* (12 August, 1949), available from: <http://www.unscn.org/layout/modules/resources/files/GenevaConventions1949.pdf>
13. Schaeffer, Halper and Epshtain, "Israel's Policy of Demolishing Palestinian Homes Must End".
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. "Stop Palestinian Home Demolitions," *Australian Jewish Democratic Society* (9 September, 2015), available from: http://www.ajds.org.au/2015/09/demolitions_petition/

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