

HOME DEMOLITIONS: A GRAVE VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

“Demolishing homes is one of the most immoral policies conducted by the Israeli occupation” - PLO Secretary General Dr. Saeb Erekat.

Over the past few months Israel, the occupying power, has increased its policy of home demolitions against Palestinian civilians, as punitive measures and collective punishment under the pretext of security. It has also threatened various communities in the Occupied State of Palestine, particularly the community of Al Hadidiya in the Jordan Valley (Tubas Governorate), with forced displacement.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Israel has imposed a systematic policy of Palestinian home demolitions since 1948, demolishing thousands of homes and over 500 villages and cities following the Nakba (catastrophe). The objective of the demolitions was mainly to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes. Large neighborhoods in cities such as Jaffa, Haifa, Isdoud, and Acre were completely transformed in an attempt to deny Palestinians of their internationally recognized right of return.

Since the 1967 military occupation, Israel, reinstated the policy of home demolitions as punitive measures and collective punishment. Other pretenses, such as lack of permits have also been used to prevent Palestinian natural growth/expansion within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This practice has been particularly strengthened in areas closer to illegal settlements or zones of occupied Palestine that Israel intends to annex, including in and around East Jerusalem, Latrun, areas around Hebron and notably the Jordan Valley, where the population has decreased from 250,000 people in 1967 to approximately 70,000 today.

Since 1967, Israel has demolished more than 30,000 Palestinian homes in occupied Palestine, including over 3,000 in Occupied East Jerusalem alone. Since 13 September 2015, 31 Palestinian homes have been demolished by Israeli occupying forces mainly under the pretense of “punitive measures” but also due to “lack of permits” from the occupation authorities.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

The Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Regulations Israel, as the belligerent occupying force, is prohibited from destroying civilian and state property of the population they occupy, and must ensure the protection of the civilian population. Home demolitions are not only a violation of Palestinian private property but are also used as collective punishment by the occupying power, a grave violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

AI- HADIDIYA

Al Hadidiya is the most recent community to be threatened with forced displacement by Israel. Al Hadidiya is a small Bedouin community located in the Jordan Valley (Tubas Governorate) with a population of nearly 100, including approximately 40 children. The Israeli occupation has erected at least 37 illegal settlements with a population of approximately 10,000 illegal settlers across the Jordan Valley, mainly for the purpose of agricultural exploitation of Palestinian natural resources.

On 25 November 2015, an EU-funded road project built for the community was partly destroyed by the Israeli army. On 26 November, 14 Palestinian structures were demolished, directly affecting three households (19 Palestinians, including 6 children).

The community is threatened with forced displacement and endures ongoing harassment by the Israeli occupying forces. This includes verbal harassment, damage to structures, and destruction of infrastructure.

STATEMENT BY PLO SECRETARY GENERAL DR. SAEB EREKAT

“Demolishing homes is one of the most immoral policies conducted by the Israeli occupation. Forcible displacement of Palestinians is part of the ongoing Nakba aimed at displacing our people and replacing them with foreign settlers. The home demolitions in Jerusalem have reached such an intolerable degree that Palestinians are virtually prevented from building on their own land, while the occupation authorities continue to justify the systematic collective punishment of our people.

We are particularly concerned with the situation in Al Hadidiya and the Jordan Valley, where Israeli colonization policies have dramatically reduced the Palestinian population for the benefit of illegal Israeli settlements. The international community has the responsibility to protect the Palestinian people living under occupation, and particularly, vulnerable communities that have been deprived of their basic rights, including their right to a home and enjoyment of their property, access to their natural resources, and to other basic services.

Home demolitions are part of the Israeli colonial policy to facilitate the annexation of Palestinian land and forced displacement. Countries who claim to support the two-state solution but have failed to recognize the State of Palestine on the 1967 border must do so immediately, just as other policies must be implemented, including banning all settlement products and divesting from all companies directly or indirectly involved with the Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine. We commend the efforts of civil society, working tirelessly to ensure their governments and communities stop rewarding companies involved in home demolitions through legislation and divestment campaigns. ”