



ICAHD UK

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

הוועד הישראלי נגד הריסת בתים

تويبالا مده دة لى ئارس إلالا ةكرحلا

Brief Overview of Israel's Demolition Policy

Since 1967 when the Occupation began in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, more than 48,000 Palestinian homes and structures have been demolished – displacing more than 300,000 Palestinians and affecting the livelihoods of thousands of others. Combine this with the more than 530 Palestinian villages that were demolished when the state of Israel was established, creating 750,000 Palestinian refugees (3/4 of the population), and its ongoing demolition policy within the state of Israel itself, the figure totals more than 100,000 Palestinian homes demolished since 1948. This is a conservative figure because multiple level homes and apartment blocks count as one unit and it doesn't include the number of self-demolitions which is a growing phenomena done because Israel issues a bill for the demolitions which most Palestinians can't afford to pay.

In the first three months of 2016, Israeli forces demolished 120 EU-funded structures in the West Bank, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In a June report, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor estimated that Israeli demolitions and attacks have resulted in the EU wasting 65 million Euros in aid for humanitarian and development projects. OCHA states that **including the first week of September, Israel has demolished 808** Palestinian structures this year which has resulted in the displacement of 1272 people. However the figure has increased since then with a surge of demolitions on **27 September, when the Israeli authorities demolished 31 Palestinian structures in six locations across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem: Jurat al Kheil east of Sa'ir in Hebron governorate; At Tur neighbourhood and Beit Safafa area of East Jerusalem; the communities of Khan Al Ahmar- Makab As Samn and Abu Nuwar in Jerusalem governorate; and Khirbet Tell el Himma in Tubas governorate.**

Among the demolished structures were seven residential structures, four water cisterns, three latrines, four animal structures and a classroom. At least, six structures were donor-funded.

As a result 41 people, including 18 children, were displaced and 63 people, including 27 children, were otherwise affected.

On 28th September, three homes of Bedouin families were demolished in the Jordan Valley and OCHA reported that an Israeli bulldozer was at work in Susiya in the South Hebron Hills.

During July – August this year, at least 2,800 Palestinians had their livelihoods affected by displacement and demolitions, with 42 communities affected over the two months. The figures for demolitions over the first 8 months of the year have increased by 50% in comparison to all of 2015. In sharp contrast, it will have taken 7 years from an Israeli state ruling agreed in 2011 (on 17 illegal Israeli outposts built on Palestinian land since 2001) to

be finally fully evacuated next year. Unfortunately this is but a small success out of a total 2,623 new units planned this year alone, according to Peace Now).

11 of the 28 structures destroyed in just one fateful week in August, including residential shelters, latrines and a water cistern, had previously been provided as humanitarian assistance. This brings **the number of aid items destroyed or confiscated since the beginning of 2016 to 223**, more than double the figure for all of 2015. Yet Netanyahu repeatedly tries to negate the existence of the Occupation and settlers, and has attempted to reframe the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and turn it on its head.

There are different categories of home demolitions in the Occupied Territory

- 1. Punitive demolitions:** Houses demolished as punishment for the actions of people associated with the houses. During the second Intifada (September 2000 - February 2005), Israel punitively demolished 664 Palestinian houses. This policy was suspended by the Israeli army in February, 2005 after it reached the conclusion that rather than deterring attacks, punitive demolitions only enflame the people and lead to more attacks. The practice was resumed on 19 January 2009 however between then and October 2015, there were few punitive demolitions. In the autumn a fresh wave of violence broke out in what has become known as the “knife” intifada, with more than 200 Israelis stabbed and more than 200 Palestinians killed. The Israeli human rights organization Btselem reports that two dozen dwellings belonging to the family members of alleged assailants have been demolished or sealed off since October 2015. Punitive demolitions **account for only 1% of all defined demolitions**. Note that this practice has also been criticized as it only applies to Palestinians because family homes of Jewish Israelis who have attacked and killed Palestinians remain untouched.
- 2. Administrative demolitions:** Houses demolished for lack of a building permit. This happens in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. In order to understand what is meant by Area C, we must refer to the Oslo Accords and the lengthy peace process from 1991 – 2000 that was sponsored by the US. Under it the Palestinian Authority (PA) was created to have limited self-governance over parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The most important issues it was to address included the borders of Israel and Palestine, the Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem, the question of Israel's military presence in and control over the remaining territories after the recognition of the Palestinian autonomy by Israel, and the Palestinian right of return. As we now know, the Oslo Accords have been a complete failure because Israel has not acted in good faith so that a viable Palestinian state on the 22% of historic Palestine could be established.

However, it was under Oslo that the West Bank was divided into three areas. See ICAHD's 'Matrix of Control' map. This was to be a temporary arrangement towards the incremental transfer of power to the Palestinians. **Area A comprises 18%** of the West Bank and is under full Palestinian control. It includes the eight major Palestinian cities of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalkilia, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho and 80% of Hebron. **Area B is 20%** of the West Bank and is where Palestinians have civil control and Israel has security control. The remaining **62% is Area C** where there is full Israeli civil and security control.

Around 300,000 Palestinians live in Area C however Israel has moved in more than 325,000 of its Jewish population who live in 125 settlements and 100 outposts. Palestinians have absolutely no involvement in land management in East Jerusalem or Area C. Therefore it is important to point out that in almost all cases, **Palestinians have**

no choice but to build "illegally" as permits will not be granted. It is also the case that in Area B, if a house is in close proximity to a military base or a road used by the military or settlers, it may also face administrative demolition. This type of demolition accounts for approximately 20% of defined demolitions.

- 3. Land-clearing operations/Military demolitions:** Houses demolished by the IDF in the course of military operations for the purposes of clearing off a piece of land (for whatever reason), achieve a military goal or to kill wanted persons as part of Israel's policy of extrajudicial executions. Military demolition account for about 61% of defined demolitions. The **18,000 Palestinian homes that were demolished or severely damaged in Gaza in the summer of 2014** during Israel's Operation Protective Edge come into this category. More than 100,000 Palestinians were left homeless. (By the end of March 2016, 3000 housing units had been constructed for approx 25,000 people).
- 4. Undefined demolitions:** ICAHD is collecting information and investigating the status of many demolitions carried out between 1967-1982. Preliminary results indicate these will include demolitions from all categories but with the majority being land-clearing operations/military and punitive.

In 99% of the cases, the demolitions have had nothing whatsoever to do with security reasons.

Today tens of thousands of Palestinians hold demolition orders in their hands and live in suspense, wondering when the bulldozers will arrive to demolish their home.

The wholesale destruction of entire villages, towns, urban neighbourhoods and their infrastructures has fundamentally damaged the very fabric of Palestinian society. Israel has succeeded in confining Palestinians to crowded and disconnected enclaves. Israel has prevented a viable Palestinian state being created and it has ensured that Israel has permanent control of the Occupied Territory. It is this ongoing process of ethnic cleansing and displacement – judaization – that continues today on *both sides* of the "Green Line."

Today it is obvious that the two-state solution is gone, finally buried under settlements and settlement blocs, a massive network of highways that incorporates the West Bank irreversibly into Israel, the Separation Barrier and a vast matrix of military bases. So much Palestinian land has been lost, so fragmented has the Palestinian territory become, that no coherent and contiguous territory exists anymore upon which a Palestinian state could be established. East Jerusalem, where the Palestinian capital would have been, is gone, its urban space reduced to tiny Palestinian enclaves amidst massive settlements, the entire Palestinian sector annexed to Israel decades before.

What this means is that today only one state exists between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River – Israel. Only one government effectively rules the entire country: Israel's. Only one army controls it: the IDF. There is but one official currency (the Israeli shekel), one water and electrical system, one highway system, etc. etc.

Israel believes that it has won: the Zionist dream of conquering the entire Land of Israel has been accomplished. It has been successful in **Demolishing Palestine.**

ICAHD UK, BM ICAHD UK, London WC1N 3XX
Email: info@icahduk.org Website: www.icahduk.org
Company Registration Number 6060984