



PRESS RELEASE

UN officials call for an immediate revocation of plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouin in the Jerusalem area
Jerusalem, 19 January 2016

Today, the Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Robert Piper, and the Director of UNRWA Operations West Bank, Felipe Sanchez, called for an immediate end to Israeli plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouin currently living within the occupied Palestinian territory in the Jerusalem area. The call follows a visit today with diplomats from 17 countries* to the Palestinian Bedouin community of Abu Nuwar, the site of recent demolitions and aid confiscations by the Israeli authorities.

Twenty-six Palestine refugees, among them 18 children, including four with disabilities, were displaced on 6 January 2016 following the destruction of their homes, and other basic structures. On 10 and 14 January 2016, Israeli authorities confiscated eight donor-funded residential tents that had been provided to the families as post-demolition humanitarian response.

“We came to Abu Nuwar to hear firsthand what residents have been through,” said Mr. Piper. “We left with a strengthened resolve to continue our support to them.”

Abu Nuwar is located in the E1 area, planned by the Israeli authorities for the expansion of Ma’ale Adummim settlement, long opposed by the international community as a violation of international law and an obstacle to the realization of the two-state solution. Abu Nuwar is among 46 communities located in the central West Bank - the majority Palestine refugee communities - slated for transfer to three designated sites away from their current location. A forced relocation of Bedouin communities to urbanized townships would threaten their culture and livelihoods. Bedouin families that were already “relocated” in the 1990s lost their income sources while their communities’ social fabric was severely damaged.

The UN Secretary-General has placed on record that implementation of plans to transfer Bedouin communities in Area C would amount to forcible transfer and forced evictions, contravening Israel’s obligations as an occupying power under humanitarian law and human rights law.

“I am once again deeply alarmed to witness Israel’s relentless push towards removing Bedouin Palestine refugees from their homes, destroying their livelihoods and their distinct culture. The children in these communities should not be experiencing the trauma of displacement that preceding generations already experienced,” said Felipe Sanchez, Director of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank.

“The destruction of property in this manner and the denial of donor-funded assistance to vulnerable Palestinian communities is unacceptable,” said Mr. Piper. “Under international law, Israel is responsible for meeting the needs of Palestinians living under its occupation and for facilitating humanitarian assistance, not for obstructing aid and pressuring residents to leave so that Israeli settlements can expand. The international community must ensure that plans to transfer these communities are revoked, if the two-state solution is to be protected.”

** The visit of EU Heads of Political Sections included: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden as well as representatives of Switzerland and the United States.*

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