

Deputy Humanitarian Chief expresses grave concern at humanitarian situation faced by Palestinian people after visiting occupied Palestinian territory

(New York, 16 May 2012) The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Catherine Bragg, completed a three-day visit to the occupied Palestinian territory today. During her mission, she visited several vulnerable Palestinian communities and witnessed first-hand the situation on the ground and the humanitarian impact of the occupation on freedom of movement and access to basic social services.

Visiting Susiya in the southern West Bank and neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Jerusalem, ASG Bragg met vulnerable Palestinian communities who live in fear of their homes being demolished or of being forcibly displaced. “I am extremely concerned about the humanitarian impact of demolitions and displacement on Palestinian families. Such actions cause great human suffering, run counter to international law and must be brought to a halt.”

After a visit to a primary school under demolition order in Susiya, Ms. Bragg added: “Many Palestinian children cannot exercise their right to safe education because their schools are threatened with demolition. Children should not have to worry whether their school will still be standing tomorrow.”

In Hebron, Ms. Bragg visited the restricted H2 area of the city and met families who regularly face settler violence. On that occasion, she noted that it is imperative that the Israeli authorities take all necessary measures to protect civilians from such violence, including addressing the culture of impunity.

Ms. Bragg had hoped to meet Israeli officials to discuss ways of improving access to and protection of civilian communities. Unfortunately, the requested meetings were not confirmed.

Concluding her mission, ASG Bragg underscored: “The continued suffering and loss of dignity is unacceptable. Palestinian communities could support themselves if they had the freedom to do so. Urgent action is required to change current policies and practices on the ground and ensure the protection of the civilian population.”

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