

UNRWA condemns demolition of Bedouin homes and school in West Bank

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East Jerusalem

Filippo Grandi, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, today condemned the demolition of homes, and partial demolition of a school, by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on 12 January in the Bedouin herding community of Dkaika, in the West Bank. He said: "I condemn this demolition in the strongest terms. Fifty people have been made homeless, including 30 children, many of whom were about to take an exam when the bulldozers arrived to destroy part of their school. Instead of sitting down to their exam, the children faced the traumatic scene of watching their homes and classroom be demolished. This is unacceptable.

"This community of refugees was originally displaced in 1948 from their ancestral land in the Negev. Now, they face the devastating consequences of another forced displacement. Demolitions of the kind we have seen in Dkaika this week affect a growing number of Palestinians, and reflect a policy of discrimination. I call on Israel to immediately cease demolitions of Palestinian properties in the occupied Palestinian territory and to respect and ensure the rights of Palestine refugees in accordance with its obligations under international law, as repeatedly called for by the international community."



The structures demolished on Wednesday in the small south Hebron village include nine residential structures, part of the village school and a large animal shelter.

Since yesterday, 15 children have been attending classes outdoors. UNRWA has given the community emergency food parcels, mattresses and blankets, and will be granting cash assistance to cover expenses related to the lost homes. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) handed out tents and kitchen sets to the affected families.

Bedouin communities in Area C (the 60 per cent of the West Bank under full Israeli control) are among the most vulnerable refugees. These communities have been drastically affected by Israeli policies and practices in Area C of the West Bank, including closures, restrictions on movement, settlement expansion, and the Barrier and its associated regime, which have led to the collapse of their traditional

herding livelihood. In some areas, almost 80 per cent of the population is unable to afford basic food. In October 2009, research showed that around 34 per cent of children in Area C herding communities suffered from chronic malnutrition or stunted growth.

Forced displacement disrupts livelihoods, sharply reduces living standards, and limits access to basic services, such as water, education and health care. In most cases, demolitions affect families and communities that already live close to or below the poverty line.

In 2010, the Israeli military destroyed more than 349 Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank (under full Israeli control), leaving almost 485 Palestinians, half of them children, homeless. This represents a significant increase over 2009, when 191 structures were demolished. Another 2,606 have seen their property or livelihood destroyed or damaged. According to official information provided by the Israeli Ministry of Defense, there are over 3,000 outstanding demolition orders for Area C structures.



Background information

High resolution photos available on request

UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.7 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, social safety-net, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance and emergency response, including in times of armed conflict.

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