

PUBLIC

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House Demolition

ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES **Zarifa Abbasi (f), aged 76**
Mohammad Abbasi (m), aged 78, her husband

The Israeli authorities are preparing to demolish the house of an elderly couple in East Jerusalem, on the grounds that it was built without a permit. Mohammad and Zarifa Abbasi are in poor health, and there are serious concerns that if they were made homeless this could have dire consequences.

The Jerusalem Municipality issued an order for the destruction of their home, in the Silwan neighbourhood, earlier this year. The couple have attempted to block the order through the courts, so far without success. They may have one more court hearing at which to challenge the demolition order, to be held later this year. They have little hope of success.

The couple suffer from health problems including rheumatism, hypertension, chronic heart disease diabetes, osteoporosis and bronchitis. At this time of year the temperature in Jerusalem can fall to near freezing, and this could have serious consequences for an elderly couple made homeless.

Earlier this year the Municipality announced that it was intending to destroy 88 houses in Silwan. After international pressure the Municipality said it had put the demolition on hold, though it has not formally cancelled the demolition orders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The authorities frequently demolish Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Occupied Territories on the grounds that they have been built without a permit. Yet it is impossible for most Palestinians in East Jerusalem to obtain permits to build a home on their own land.

In the past two year such demolitions have increased. More than 160 Palestinian homes have been demolished in East Jerusalem since the beginning of 2004, leaving more than 500 people homeless. In the five-year period 1999 to 2003 the total number of demolitions was around 240.

Since Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli authorities have pursued a policy of limiting new construction in the Palestinian neighbourhoods. The expropriation by Israel of large areas of Palestinian land left most Palestinian areas in and around East Jerusalem with little or no land on which to build. Where there is land, it is not permitted to build, because much of the privately owned land has been zoned as "green land". Attempts by Palestinians to have their land re-zoned so that it can be used for building homes have invariably failed. At the same time Israel has been building large settlements (which are illegal under international law) for the exclusive use of Israeli Jewish citizens on expropriated Palestinian land in the area. While Palestinians homes are still being demolished because they were built without a permit – permits which are virtually impossible to obtain – illegal Israeli settlements continue to be built and expanded in East Jerusalem. Demolitions of homes of Israeli Jews built without permit are unheard of. According to international law East Jerusalem is part of the Occupied Territories and its annexation by Israel is in violation of international law

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Hebrew or your own language:

- expressing concern that the Jerusalem Municipality has issued an order to demolish the home of Mohammad and Zarifa Abbasi, in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, and calling on the Mayor to cancel the demolition order;
- calling on him to cancel all other outstanding orders to demolish unlicensed houses in East Jerusalem;
- calling for a moratorium on demolitions of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem until such time as planning and building laws are amended in a manner that complies with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Uri Lupolianski
Mayor of Jerusalem
Jerusalem Municipality
1 Safra Square
Jerusalem 91007
ISRAEL

Fax: +972 2 629 6014

E-mail: lpuri@jerusalem.muni.il

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 January 2006.