

PUBLIC

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Forced Eviction/ health concern

ISRAEL/OPT

45 residents, including 30 children, of Umm al-Kheir village



Residents of Umm al-Kheir on the rubble of their demolished homes on 29 October 2008, with the roofs of the Israeli settlement in the background (© CPT)

The Israeli army demolished six homes and other structures on 29 October, leaving 45 Palestinians homeless in the village of Umm al-Kheir, in the Southern Hebron Hills region of the occupied West Bank.

The demolished properties were home to brothers Ali and Salem Muhammad al-Hathaleen, their families and the families of Suleiman and Salem 'Eid al-Hathaleen. Much of the families' furniture was damaged by the workers contracted by the Israeli army to clear the homes prior to the demolition. Other non-residential structures were also demolished, including an animal pen that housed the villagers' herds. The villagers of Umm al-Kheir mostly depend on goat herding for their livelihood.

The health and security of these homeless families are a growing concern with the onset of winter, which brings cold temperatures and rain. The residents have been provided with tents and other emergency supplies by the UN Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who visited the village immediately after the demolition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Israeli army last demolished homes in Umm al-Kheir on 14 February 2007, when it destroyed six homes. For years it has been exerting pressure on the village's Palestinian residents to abandon the area even though the villagers have lived there for generations. In recent years several other families in Umm al-Kheir and neighbouring villages have had their homes and animal pens destroyed and hundreds more have demolition orders pending on their properties.

Residents of Umm al-Kheir and neighbouring villages are concerned that further demolitions will be carried out and more families will be made homeless. The Israeli army claims that the demolished homes and other structures that are under threat of demolition have been built without building permits, but at the same time

the army has consistently refused to grant building permits to Palestinians living in "Area C", an area which covers 60 per cent of the occupied West Bank.

At the same time, Israel continues to expand hundreds of Israeli settlements, illegal under international law, on occupied Palestinian land illegally confiscated in the Southern Hebron Hills and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). To enable the expansion of Israeli settlements, the Israeli army forces Palestinian residents out of the areas by refusing them building permits, demolishing their homes, denying access to water, electricity and other essential services and imposes stringent restrictions on their movements in the area.

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

- condemning the demolition of the homes and other non-residential structures, including an animal pen, in Umm al-Kheir on 29 October;
- urging the authorities to allow the villagers to rebuild their homes immediately and be protected against further demolition and harassment;
- urging that any other existing demolition orders against Palestinian homes and properties in the area be immediately revoked;
- calling on the authorities to place a moratorium on house demolitions and forced evictions in the occupied West Bank until the law is amended to bring it into line with international standards;
- calling for the restrictions imposed on the Palestinian villagers in Umm al-Kheir and the rest of the Southern Hebron Hills area to be lifted, in particular for them to have access to water, electricity and other essential services, and for them to be allowed to move freely within the area, and between there and the rest of the West Bank;
- calling for responsibility for planning and building regulations in "Area C" of the West Bank and elsewhere in the OPT to be removed from the Israeli military authorities and placed solely with the local Palestinian communities.

APPEALS TO:

Ehud Barak
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence, 37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

President Shimon Peres
President of the State of Israel
The Office of the President
3 Hanassi Street, Jerusalem 92188, Israel

Fax: +972 2 561 1033 or +972 2 566 4838
email: public@president.gov.il president@president.gov.il s_peres@netvision.net.il
www.president.gov.il

Salutation: Dear President

Major General Gadi Shamni
Commander, West Bank
Central Commander Office 64, Military Mail 02367 – IDF, Israel

Fax: +972 2 5305741
Salutation: Dear Major General Shamni

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 11 December 2008.