



United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator calls for an end to punitive demolitions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Jerusalem, 3 December 2014

The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. James W. Rawley, today expressed serious concern over the Israeli authorities' resumption of punitive demolitions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

This practice targets the family homes of perpetrators, or alleged perpetrators, of attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces, with the stated objective of deterring others from committing attacks. In recent phone conversations with the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the State of Palestine, the UN Secretary-General said he was alarmed by the upsurge of violence in recent weeks.

"Punitive demolitions are a form of collective penalty that punishes people for acts they did not commit," said Mr. Rawley. "They render innocent people homeless. The impact on children, women and the elderly is particularly devastating."

Between 1 June and 30 November 2014, the Israeli authorities demolished or sealed five homes in this context, displacing 34 Palestinians, including 16 children. Another six families, including four in East Jerusalem and two in other parts of the West Bank, are at imminent risk of displacement.

Punitive demolitions run counter to a range of rights and protections outlined in various international legal instruments that Israel has accepted. These include the prohibition on the destruction of private property in an occupied territory, the absolute ban on collective penalties, and the rights to fair trial and due process and to adequate housing, among others.

"Punitive demolitions must stop. They contravene international law and risk undermining the already fragile situation," Mr. Rawley stated. "Human rights violations are not only a symptom of the continued conflict here; they contribute to it."

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