

SPATE OF DEMOLITIONS THREATEN BEDOUIN COMMUNITITIES NEAR JERUSALEM

(Jerusalem, 21 July 2011): Today, Mr Maxwell Gaylard, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) visited the Bedouin village of Khan Al Ahmar, together with David Hutton, UNRWA Acting Director for the West Bank, at a time when the community is now facing mass demolitions. This visit took place in the context of a significant increase in demolitions in Area C, where Israel retains control over security, planning and zoning, compared with the same period last year. More demolitions have taken place this year than in all of 2009 or 2010.

The Khan Al Ahmar village is situated along Road No.1, just twenty minutes from Jerusalem, between two Israeli settlements in Area C. Residents, mostly refugees, have lived in this area since 1948.

Last week, the Khan Al Ahmar village received four new stop-building orders. The community has not been able to obtain building permits due to restrictive and inadequate planning policies in Area C. There are also ongoing demolition orders against an additional 250 structures in surrounding communities.

Some 20 Bedouin communities, with a combined population of 2,353, two-thirds of them under 18, live in this area in the Jerusalem periphery. Over 80 percent of the communities are now at risk of displacement, due to the expansion of the Ma'ale Adumin settlement and the planned route of the Barrier.

During the visit, OCHA also presented new research focused on displacement of Palestinians in Area C. This research, based on field visits to 13 communities in Area C, found that in most of these communities Palestinian families are being forced to leave due to restrictive policies and practices of the Israeli authorities, including movement and access restrictions, settlement activity, and restrictions on Palestinian construction. The research also highlights how these policies are undermining traditional livelihoods in these communities and placing thousands of others at risk of displacement.

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For further information, please call:

Reena Ghelani, OCHA, +972 2 5829962 mobile +972 54 3311805, ghelani@un.org;
Yeheskel Lein, OCHA, +972 2 5829962, mobile +972 54 331 1809, lein@un.org;

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