

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 15/057/2007

14 August 2007

Further Information on UA 99/07 (MDE 15/029/2007, 27 April 2007, MDE 15/052/2007, 27 July 2007, and MDE 15/055/2007, 3 August 2007) House demolition/Forced Eviction/Denial of Access to Water

**ISRAEL/
OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

More than 100 residents of Hadidiya Village

Several homes were destroyed by the Israeli army on the morning of 13 August in the Palestinian village of Humsa, in the Jordan Valley area of the Occupied West Bank. The destroyed properties were home to the families of Abdallah Hsein Bisharat (more than 30 people) and Ahmad Abdallah Bani Odeh (some 10 people).

Most of those who have been affected by this latest demolition are children. The families whose homes were destroyed, as well as other families whose homes remain at risk of demolition, had been forced to move to the Humsa area from the nearby hamlet of Haididiya last April, when the Israeli army increased the pressures to force the Palestinian population of Hadidiya and Humsa to abandon the area altogether.

As part of the increased pressure being exerted by the Israeli army on the villagers has been the imposition of additional restrictions on their movements and on their access to water. The lack of water, especially during the hottest months of the year (July-August) has already forced some of the villagers to spend more time away from the village.

One of those whose home was demolished Ahmad Abdallah Bani Odeh, had his tractor and water tank confiscated by Israeli soldiers on 28 July. The army told the villagers and confirmed to Amnesty International that to get the tractor and water tank back they must sign a pledge to leave and not return to the area, which the Israeli army considers a "closed military area" for use by Israeli forces as a shooting practice area. They must also pay a fine of 4,500 Shekels (approx US\$1,000), which is unaffordable for people living below the poverty line on less than US\$2 a day.

The confiscation of the tractor (one of only two in the village) and water tank worsened the already dire water shortage for the Palestinian villagers in the area. They have to travel to other areas to buy water, as the Israeli army does not allow them to use the nearby well, even if they pay, which is for the sole use of the Israeli settlers in the nearby settlements of Ro'i, Beka'ot and Hamdat.

The latest demolitions, together with the increased harassment, restrictions on movement and on access to water, is part of the Israeli army's concerted efforts to force the Palestinian inhabitants of large areas of the Jordan Valley to leave the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Israeli army is making increasing efforts to force local Palestinian communities out of the area, notably through house demolition, restriction on movement and preventing access to water and other essential services. These communities have been living in the areas since long before the Israeli army occupied the West Bank in 1967.

The Palestinian Bedouin residents of Hadidiya have traditionally been farmers and herders, living off their crops and the dairy products from their sheep and goats. The growing restrictions imposed by the Israeli

army in recent years on their movements and access to water have made it increasingly difficult for them to survive in the area. Now the Israeli army is taking steps to force them out of the area altogether.

The villagers have welcomed international pressure, which has brought several high-level delegations to visit the Hadidiya and Humsa area. However, as international attention diminishes the threat to the villagers increases and further action now is crucial.

For years Israel has pursued a policy of discriminatory house demolition, allowing scores of Israeli settlements, illegal under international law, to be built on occupied Palestinian land, while confiscating Palestinian lands, refusing building permits for Palestinians and destroying their homes. The land vacated has often been used to build illegal Israeli settlements. International law forbids occupying powers from settling their own citizens in the territories they occupy.

Palestinians, especially Palestinian Bedouins, who live in the Jordan Valley, have suffered particular pressure. Most of the Jordan Valley area of the occupied West Bank has been declared a military area by the Israeli army or has been taken over by some 36 Israeli settlements.

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 animal pens in Humsa on 13 August 2007;
- urging that any other existing demolition orders against Palestinian homes and properties in the area be immediately rescinded;
- urging that the tractor and water tank confiscated from Ahmad Abdallah Bani Odeh on 28 July be immediately returned without him having to pledge to leave the Hadidiya/Humsa area and without him having to pay a fine;
- expressing concern at the Israeli army's efforts to restrict Palestinian villagers' movements and access to water in the Humsa and Hadidiya area and elsewhere in the Jordan Valley;
- 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 the Jordan Valley 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 Jordan Valley, and between there and the rest of the West Bank;
- calling for responsibility for planning and building regulations in the Jordan Valley and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be removed from the Israeli military authorities and placed solely with the local Palestinian communities.

APPEALS TO:

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Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia
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Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

Brigadier General Avihai Mandelblit
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Salutation: Dear Judge Advocate General

Legal Advisor
IDF Civil Administration in the West Bank

Fax: +972 2 997 7326

Salutation: Dear Sir

Commander
IDF District Coordination Office (DCO)
Jericho, West Bank, via Israel

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Salutation: Dear Sir

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 24 September 2007.