

Land Defence Coalition - Contact: tel.: +970-568921821 mail: global@stopthewall.org



Members: Stop the Wall Campaign, Palestinian Farmers Union, Palestinian New Federation of Trade Unions (New Unions), Palestine Youth Forum, Association for Farmers' Rights and for the Preservation of the Environment, Women Center for Social Development, Association Jadayel / Palestinian Center for Culture, Arts and Creativity, Palestinian Farmers Society-Tulkarem, N'lin Society for Development and Community Work, Popular Council to Protect the Jordan Valley, Al-Amal Association for Childhood and Development

Occupied Palestine, November 27 2015

To:

*The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,
Federica Mogherini*

Cc:

*The European External Action Service
The Maghreb Mashreq Working Party*

Object: Reaction to further steps in the forced population transfer in the Jordan Valley

Dear Ms. Federica Mogherini,

We are addressing you in the case of the Jordan Valley village al Hadidiya after the punitive demolitions on Thursday, November 26 2015, which are part of Israel's policies aimed at displacing the community.

Thursday, at 7:30 in the morning, Israeli military entered the Jordan Valley community al Hadidiya for yet another wave of demolitions. The punitive operation destroyed 14 constructions and targeted the family of the head of the community and human rights defender, Abu Saqer. It was a clear retaliation for the fact that the people of al Hadidiya had started to prepare the dirt road that links the village to the world for the rainy winter months by placing gravel onto it. The property value destroyed is according to initial estimates between ten and fifteen thousand dollars. Abu Saqer's pregnant daughter was attacked by the soldiers and has been admitted to hospital with the risk to lose her baby.

The demolition occurred despite the fact that an appeal against demolition orders is still pending in Israeli courts and until judgement all orders are to be suspended. The community has been repeatedly targeted by demolitions, denial of access to water and infrastructure as well as by military trainings in the area. Al Hadidiya in the Jordan Valley - just as Susiya in the South Hebron Hills - is a community Israel uses as an example, hoping that any success in effectively displacing the community will have a domino effect in the region.

Al Hadidiya is one of the communities targeted by Israel's 'relocation' plan of communities in Area C, especially the Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley, E1 and the South Hebron Hills. The Israeli policies towards these communities have been defined by the United Nations and the European Union as amounting to forced population transfer, which constitutes a war

crime under the IV Geneva Convention and a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute. War crimes and crimes against humanity trigger self-executing obligations for third states, including the obligation to ensure an end to these violations of international law.

In the wake of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, we remind the EU of the EU Council Conclusions of the Middle East Peace Process, in which the Council “reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access.”

Based on the EU's own commitments and obligations under international law, we urge the European Union and member states to:

- take urgent action to ensure al Hadidiya can rebuild their homes and shelters as well as the gravel road and will be protected from further demolitions through public statements, diplomatic demarches and field visits of representatives in the area.
- take urgent action to stop repressive and punitive measures by Israel against human rights defenders working to stop policies of forced population transfer and the Israeli settlement project.
- to give practical support to the community in the efforts rebuild their homes and shelters, while recognizing that the fact the Israeli military has stopped short of destroying the solar panels in al Hadidiya while reducing the homes of the people to rubble is symptom of an excessive focus on defending EU donor project as opposed to enforcing the EU's international obligation to end Israel's policy of forced population transfer.
- redouble efforts to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and human rights, including by suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement, banning products partially or totally produced in the settlements and barring companies involved in Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as those listed by the EU Council Conclusions of 2015, from access to EU funding mechanisms such as Horizon 2020.

Kind regards,

Jamal Juma',
coordinator of the Land Defense Coalition
coordinator of the Stop the Wall Campaign

Abu Saqer,
Spokesperson of al Hadidiya

ANNEX:

Details about the demolitions

Two army bulldozers accompanied by six military jeeps invaded al Hadidiya and destroyed ten structures owned by Abu Saqer and the 40 members of his extended family. This included the barracks where his family lives, the shelters for the animals, the oven where the family bakes its bread and the shelter where he stores the fodder for his livestock. Additionally, the army destroyed as well two shelters belonging to Abu Saqer's son, Gazi, leaving as well him, his wife and two children without a place to live. The army demolished as well two shelters and a tent belonging to Mohamed Mahmoud Bisharat, one of the elders of the community.

During the wave of destruction, the military brutally attacked Abu Saqer's daughter, pregnant in her third month, who had to be brought to the hospital bleeding.

This invasion and destruction comes after yesterday the military destroyed the efforts made to prepare the access road to the village. A month ago, the community started to put gravel on the dirt road to ensure it would keep accessible as well during the upcoming raining season. This would allow the children to keep attending school and guarantee access to services and other villages and cities for the community. People had been working with their shovels and with a tractor owned by the community on this project. Abu Saqer was responsible for liaising with the international organizations that supported the project.

While the military was destroying the road, the threatened Abu Saqer with further demolitions. He insisted that the appeal against the demolitions is still pending in the Israeli courts and no decision has been made to allow for further demolitions. A fact the lawyers confirmed.

As times before, the Israeli military turned up today, without demolition orders and destroyed a good part of the community as a collective punishment for the effort to improve the conditions of a dirt road with gravel.

The military returned another time in the afternoon to threaten the community members that had started to rebuild the structures and shelters. They singled out Rashid al Kadiry, the owner of the only truck in the community and told him that his truck and Abu Saqer's tractor would be confiscated if they continued to rebuild the structures and would not within an hour demolish again what they had already built. The military further informed them, that their structures and existence is 'illegal' and that they had to move elsewhere.

History of displacement

Al Hadidiya was a thriving farming community before the occupation of 1967, with around 300 families. In 1997 160 family court case against home demol they were driven from the land that they owned and had no choice but to settle several kilometres away – moving into makeshift tents. They have been forced to live like this for the last 18 years, with the occupation authorities

systematically denying them the right to build any permanent structures, or to have running water, electricity, schools, health care or roads.

In 2000, over 15 families left due to measures imposed by the Israeli army that limited the community's access to water. Tractors and water tankers were confiscated on the grounds that they were located in a 'forbidden zone.' One water tanker was confiscated for eight months and only released when residents paid a NIS 12,000 fine.

In 2002 and 2003, some eight families left the community after the Israeli army dug a trench to the west of Al Hadidiya, impeding residents' access to food, water and basic services. A few of the families sold their sheep and moved to Tamun, which is located in Area A. These families now survive as paid laborers or rely on their children, who are herders. Others went to the Khirbet Atuf area and continued herding.

Between 2003 and 2008, approximately eight families left for different reasons, including additional demolitions by the Israeli authorities, which occurred between 2005 and 2007, and the installation of a road gate to the west of the community, affecting the community's access to water. In 2008, four additional families left the community following demolitions.

In June 2011, the Israeli military carried out two sets of demolitions in Al Hadidiya, demolishing 33 structures, leaving 37 residents without homes and undermining the livelihood of a further 15. Most of these, 29, were demolished on 21 June 2011. Since that time, a court case against further demolitions is pending in Israeli courts and theoretically freezes all demolition orders. Yet, the remaining twelve families that stand firm and refuse to leave the area have already seen several demolitions occurring without legal orders or prior notification.

To further push the community out of their lands, military exercises using heavy tanks and live ammunition are regularly held within a few hundred metres of people's homes

Al Hadidiya and Israel's illegal settlements

The illegal Israeli colonies of Ro'i and Beqa'ot have appropriated already 3000 dunums of agricultural land from al Hadidiya.

Since 1977, the Israeli settlement Ro'i has been expanding on Al Hadidiya's land in the area. The efforts to expel the community are aimed at granting free access for the settlement to 20,000 dunums of the Palestinian Bedouins' fertile lands in the northern Jordan Valley for colonization.

Despite its proximity to a pump of Mekorot – the Israeli national water company – the village is not hooked up to the water network. As a result, Al Hadidiya residents depend on expensive water tankers, ending up paying 30 NIS for a cubic meter, about six times as much as they would be paying if they were connected to the network. This explains why the average water consumption in Al Hadidiya (20 litres per person per day) is far lower than the absolute minimum of 100 litres recommended by the World Health Organization.

On the contrary, the two nearby settlements of Ro'i and Beqa'ot are served by Mekorot, and their average water consumption for household use alone – that is without considering water used for agriculture – is at least 23 times that of Al Hadidiya: 460 litres per person per day.