
HUNDREDS DISPLACED OR RENDERED HOMELESS BY PUNITIVE ISRAELI DEMOLITIONS

25 June 2016

CONCERN FOR USE OF EXPLOSIVES

UNRWA is gravely concerned about the recent decision of the Israeli High Court of Justice to reject the appeals filed by Palestine refugee families against two punitive demolitions in Kalandia refugee camp. The two families were given five days as of 14 June to evacuate the apartments. Today, the families are in a state of perpetual apprehension as they wait for implementation of the punitive demolition which could occur at any undefined time.

The demolition orders were given for stabbing attacks perpetrated by individual members of the families outside Jaffa gate, Jerusalem Old City on 23 December 2015. Two Israeli civilians died during the attack while a third civilian was seriously wounded. The perpetrators were shot dead by Israeli Security Forces. The United Nations has repeatedly condemned all attacks against Israeli or Palestinian civilians, including in statements by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

UNRWA remains concerned that six Palestine refugees are at risk of being made homeless as a result of the punitive demolitions. Further, although the Court stated the demolition of the home located in the most crowded area should not involve explosives, it could impact other neighboring structures. On 16 November 2015, during a punitive demolition in the same refugee camp, 19 Palestine refugees were displaced and 46 persons were affected. Two Palestine refugees were also killed during the clashes that erupted during the operation.

Punitive demolitions are illegal under international law. UNRWA communicated its position to the Israeli authorities in April 2016 in the context of Israeli court proceedings relating to punitive demolitions in Kalandia refugee camp. UNRWA calls upon the Israeli authorities to put an end to the practice of punitive demolitions in the West Bank.

In 2015 and 2016, a total of 30 punitive demolitions were carried out, displacing and rendering homeless 243 Palestinians, including 42 Palestine refugees, as a result.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016 to stand at US\$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.

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