



## Report: Israel to evict up to 250 families in Jordan Valley (Alternative Information Center)

November 12, 2012

The Displaced Working Group (DWG) had received reports that more than 40 eviction orders were distributed to over 50 Palestinian families in the northern Jordan Valley, giving them between three hours and two months to leave their homes (see below). More recent reports indicate that Israeli authorities actually intend to issue **as many as 150 eviction orders affecting as many 250 families living in or near areas designed as "firing zones"** in the Jordan Valley, in areas extending between Ma'ale Efrayim checkpoint and the junction between road 578 and road 90 (the Alon Road) and eastward from Road 578 to Tayasir checkpoint.

- **Khirbet Yarza:** Israeli authorities have reportedly verbally informed the residents of the village that they will have to leave the area to make way for military training that will last for 6 months, i.e. from next Monday 12 November and until 30 April 2013. The authorities indicated that written orders would shortly be issued for this purpose. The residents of Yarza have suffered repeated demolitions in the past, including of their residential structures, animal shelters and the village mosque (on at least two occasions).
- In **Khirbeit ar Ras al Ahmar:** Israeli authorities have instructed the residents to leave their homes on Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 17.00 due to military training. The residents of the village have suffered repeated demolitions in the past. For example, on 4 June 2009, Israeli authorities demolished almost 70 structures in the village, including 15 residential tents, forcibly displacing 128 people, more than half of them children.

In addition, the residents of **Al Aqaba** and **Ein Shibli** report heavy military presence in their areas, with at least 2 families in Ein Shibli being issued eviction notices for a period of 2 months, with a week's notice to leave the area. Israeli military forces often enter Ein Shibli (especially during the night), in some cases searching homes and causing destruction of property. In June this year, for example, the village spring was damaged by a bulldozer during a training exercise and some of the water diverted to a well dug by the military, reducing the amount available for the residents (the spring being their main source of water for domestic and livelihood-related purposes). A photograph, taken by one of the residents at the time, is attached.

It is not clear at this stage if and how the orders will be implemented and whether people will be temporarily or permanently displaced. There is, however, a lot of fear and anxiety in the communities, not least relating to the means for shelter, the health of their animals and their access to water resources, all of which may be affected if these training plans proceed.

### Background on "Firing Zones"

As many of you know, around 18% of the land in the West Bank is a closed military area for the purposes of military training, often termed "firing zones" (there are other closed military areas in the West Bank, e.g. around Israeli settlements and in the seam-zone, that are justified in different ways). The majority of the "firing zones" are located in the Jordan Valley and along the eastern slopes of the Bethlehem and Hebron Governorates. More than 5,000 Palestinians reside in such areas in around 38 communities, mostly Bedouin or herding communities, many of which existing before the areas were designated as closed military zones (in addition, there are at least 10 Israeli outposts located partially or completely in such areas). Palestinian access to the areas is generally prohibited and the Palestinian residents face repeated demolitions and displacement. Since 2010, more than 820 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced due to demolitions carried out in communities located within such areas. You can find more information, along with a map, [here](#).

It is worth noting that a recent legal opinion, prepared by Dr. Michael Both, Professor emeritus of international law at J.W. Goethe University in Germany in cooperation with Diakonia, concluded that the declaration of "firing zones" for training purposes, together with the forced displacement of the residents of such areas, constitutes a violation of international law, including Art. 46, 52 of the Hague Regulations; Arts. 27, 49, 53 and 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; Art. 12 of ICCPR and Art. 11 of ICESCR, as well as customary law. It is worth noting violation of some of these provisions, i.e. relating to forcible transfer and extensive destruction of property, may amount to a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.

*\*The Displaced Working Group is a gathering of local and international organisations working on the various aspects related to home demolitions and displacement of Palestinians by Israel in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.*