

**Aid agencies call for immediate end to demolitions and
settlement expansion as Israel displaces Palestinians across
the West Bank**

ActionAid; Action Against Hunger (ACF); Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED); American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); Diakonia; HelpAge International; Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP UK); medico; Norwegian People's Aid (NPA); Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH); Premiere Urgence- Aide MedicaleInternatonal (PU-AMI); Terres des Hommes (TdH- Italia); The Carter Center; The Lutheran World Federation (LWF); War Child Holland

(May 1, 2013, Jerusalem)- 16 aid and development agencies are urging world leaders to press the government of Israel to immediately stop the destruction of Palestinian property and stop building Israeli settlements after a wave of demolitions left 52 Palestinians homeless this past week.

Between April 23- 30, Israeli bulldozers have destroyed 36 basic Palestinian homes and structures. This includes 5 emergency shelters the French Consulate provided for families who were left homeless by Israeli demolitions earlier this year. The demolitions took place throughout the occupied West Bank, in areas close to the illegal settlements or in Israeli military zones in Area C, where the Israeli Government maintains full civil and military control.

The agencies said world leaders have an obligation to hold Israel accountable for settlement expansion, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and forced transfer, all of which are violations of International Law.

“These demolitions seem to be systematic and are causing widespread displacement from Area C of the occupied West Bank. World leaders cannot turn a blind eye when families with young children and the elderly are being thrown out of their homes to make way for expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. This simply must stop,” said David Viveash, Director of The Carter Center Field Office.

Thousands of Palestinians are living under threat of displacement from Area C, with the agencies identifying severe vulnerability in the politically sensitive Jerusalem periphery, known as E1, and in the southern Hebron Hills and northern Jordan Valley, where the Israeli military yesterday displaced at least 70 Palestinian families from 6 different villages in order to conduct military training drills.

Warning that the failure to act was only increasing the suffering and poverty of already vulnerable Palestinians, the agencies noted that demolition of homes and water infrastructure were denying Palestinians their basic rights to shelter and water. Furthermore, restricted access of Palestinians in the military zones and settlement areas were preventing families from earning an income from farming their land and preventing children from reaching school.

“Settlement expansion, and the demolitions and displacement that accompany it, are forms of violence that prevents the chances for Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace. World leaders must act now to address violations and end this vicious cycle before it is too late,” said Kjetil Østnor, Country Director for Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA).

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Notes to Editors:

On 29 April the Israeli army issued orders of evacuation for a period of 12- 24 hours to around 70-100 families in the northern Jordan Valley in order to conduct military training drills. Several hundred Palestinians have been temporarily displaced in recent months due to repeated military training exercises in this area, with reports that the drills often result in damage to crops like wheat and barley, causing financial hardship for the families.

The demolitions between 23- 30 April come just three months after the Israeli army undertook an unprecedented move to raze 120 Palestinian structures in January, displacing 251 people from their homes throughout Area C, including the families who were provided the 5 emergency shelters from the French Consulate destroyed during this demolition round.

In 2013, 203 Palestinian structures have been demolished thus far, displacing 379 people, including 222 children, and otherwise affecting an additional 541 people’s ability to earn an the income or access water and other basic services. Since 2008, over 2,400 Palestinian structures have been demolished and over 4,400 Palestinian have been displaced.

Israeli demolition of Palestinian structures typically takes place because they lack building permits, which are hard to obtain, with 94 percent of Palestinian applications for building permits denied in recent years.

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