



OCHA Flash Update

Third large-scale demolition in Khirbet Tana in 2016

24 March 2016

On 23 March, the Israeli authorities destroyed 53 structures in the Palestinian community of Khirbet Tana, located in Area C of the occupied West Bank, on grounds of lack of Israeli-issued building permits. This is one of the largest incidents since OCHA began systematically tracking demolitions in 2009.

The targeted structures included 22 homes, resulting in the displacement of 87 people, among them 35 children and 22 women. The other structures destroyed were animal shelters (19), latrine units (6), traditional ovens (5) and a water reservoir. Eighteen (18) of the demolished structures were donor-funded humanitarian assistance, the majority provided following previous demolitions this year. During the operation, five residential caves were also damaged and four vehicles belonging to the residents were confiscated.

Khirbet Tana, located in the Nablus Governorate, is home to approximately 250 people who rely on herding and agriculture for their livelihood and have lived in the area for decades. Some community structures date back to times prior to the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967.

Due to the community's location within an area declared as a "firing zone" for Israeli military training purposes (Firing Zone 904A), residents are denied building permits and have experienced repeated waves of demolitions, the last two taking place on 9 February and 2 March 2016. These demolitions generate a coercive environment, exacerbating residents' risk of forcible transfer, prohibited by international humanitarian law. Following the previous demolition in Khirbet Tana, an Israeli Ministry of Defense spokesperson stated that the targeted structures "were built illegally without permits in a firing zone, which is a life danger".

Nearby Khirbet Tana, within the boundaries of the firing zone, there are two Israeli settlement outposts, which were established in recent years without permit. Although the Israeli authorities have issued dozens of demolition orders against structures in these outposts, only a few have been implemented. Moreover, in 2012 the Israeli Civil Administration (the "Blue Line Team") issued an update to a previous "state land" declaration covering the area of one of these outposts, ostensibly with the aim of retroactively regularizing the outpost.

Approximately 18 percent of the West Bank has been declared by the Israeli authorities as "firing zones", roughly the same amount of the West Bank designated as Area A. This year, nearly half of demolitions have occurred in communities located within such areas. Earlier this week, the Israeli authorities demolished two structures in another "firing zone" in southern Hebron (Masafer Yatta, Hebron).

Since the beginning of 2016, the Israeli forces have destroyed or dismantled 468 homes and other structures across the West Bank, the vast majority in Area C, displacing over 650 Palestinians. More

than half of those displaced were children. Over 1,800 other people lost structures related to their sources of income. 140 of the structures targeted so far this year were provided as humanitarian assistance to families in need, making a 30 per cent increase compared to the number of humanitarian assistance-structures demolished in the entire 2015.

Data and analysis provided in this Flash Update is based on preliminary information available. OCHA oPt *Flash Updates* are issued following developments raising humanitarian concerns and requiring coordinated humanitarian responses.