



Humanitarian Coordinator calls for end to punitive demolitions in the occupied West Bank

Jerusalem, 16 November 2015

In operations to “deter others”, the family homes of five alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis in 2015 have been demolished by Israeli security forces since 14 November. At least nine additional adjacent apartments have been damaged and rendered unsafe. During the most recent operation this morning in Qalandiya refugee camp, initial information indicates that two Palestinians were killed, and nine others were injured, in clashes to protest against the demolition.

Punitive demolitions are a form of collective penalty as they effectively punish not only the alleged perpetrators but also people (relatives, neighbours) for acts they have not individually committed. Collective penalties are prohibited under international law. Initial assessments indicate 20 people, including eight children, were rendered homeless by the demolition of the five homes.

The policy of such punitive demolitions was suspended by the Government of Israel in 2005 after an Israeli military committee deemed it ineffective as a deterrent. Such actions have restarted since mid-2014, with the exception of one case in 2009.

“I am distressed by reports of punitive demolitions carried out by Israeli security forces of five homes in the Jerusalem, Nablus, and Ramallah governorates in the last few days,” said Robert Piper, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the occupied Palestinian territory.

“We recognize Israel’s serious security challenges today, but any law enforcement response must be consistent with international law. Punitive demolitions are inherently unjust, punishing innocent people for the acts of others.”

END

Since 1 June 2014, the Israeli authorities have demolished, sealed or destroyed with explosives 16 structures in the above context. This has displaced 90 Palestinians, including 51 children, according to figures recorded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In addition, at least 12 apartments that were adjacent to targeted structures were damaged, temporarily displacing at least 55 people.

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