



## PRESS RELEASE

### **UN Officials call for an immediate demolitions freeze in the West Bank**

*Jerusalem, 18 August 2015*

Today, the Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Robert Piper, and the Director of UNRWA Operations West Bank, Felipe Sanchez, expressed grave concern about demolitions that were carried out yesterday by the Israeli Civil Administration in vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin refugee communities in Area C, near East Jerusalem. The officials both called for an immediate freeze on demolitions in the West Bank.

A total of 22 structures were demolished in four communities (Khan al Ahmar Abu Falah, Wadi Sneysel, Bir Miskoob and Az Zayyem Bedouin), displacing 78 Palestinians, including 49 children, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees. All four communities are located in and around the area of the planned E-1 settlement. According to UN records, this is the largest number of Palestinians displaced in the West Bank in one day in nearly three years. Concerns are also rising over reports of new displacements today in the Jordan Valley community of Fasayil al Wusta.

“Yesterday’s demolitions targeted some of the most vulnerable communities in the West Bank,” Mr. Piper said. “The scale of displacement is particularly concerning - nearly 50 children lost their homes yesterday.”

“Many of these refugee families have now been displaced four times in the last four years” said Mr. Sanchez.

The four communities are among 46 located in the central West Bank that are included in Israeli plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouin communities to three designated sites. The UN Secretary-General has stated that the implementation of the proposed “relocation” would amount to forcible transfers and forced evictions, contravening Israel’s obligations as an occupying power under humanitarian law and human rights law.

“The strategic implications of these demolitions are clear,” said Mr. Piper. “These demolitions are occurring in parallel with settlement expansion. The relocation plan for these communities would effectively remove Palestinian presence in and around the planned E1 settlement project. This settlement project anticipates the construction of thousands of new Israeli housing units in the West Bank on the outskirts of Jerusalem. E-1 has long been opposed by the international community as an obstacle to the realization of the two-state solution and a violation of international law.”

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