



One Year Report on Demolitions and Seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2022 ¹

Summary

In 2022, a total of 953 structures were demolished or seized throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem - the highest number recorded since 2016. Of structures demolished, more than 80% (781) were located in Area C. In total, 1,031 individuals have been displaced and 28,446 affected as a result of demolitions. All but 35 of the structures were targeted for lacking building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Area C and East Jerusalem.

Of the structures targeted in the twelve-month reporting period, 101 structures were funded by the EU or EU Member States (valued at EUR €337,019), representing the third highest financial injury since 2016.

In East Jerusalem, the number of structures being demolished by their owners has risen significantly, from 34% in 2021 to 51% in 2022. Area C continued to experience a rise in targeted structures located in Bedouin and Herding communities. Of concern was also the seizure of structures based on Military Order 1797, which provides only a 96-hour notice and very limited grounds for legally challenging a demolition. A trend observed in Area A and B was the increase in demolitions of structures based on punitive grounds. Demolition orders and waves of demolitions in the communities of Masafer Yatta and Al Walajah were of great concern.

The 6-year high demolition number recorded in 2022 was accompanied by a spike in the scale and severity of settler violence; 849 settler incidents recorded in 2022, representing a 58% increase compared with 2021 and a 123% increase compared with 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, Israeli authorities have continued to carry out demolitions of Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Demolitions have negatively affected Palestinian communities and have resulted in the continued displacement of Palestinians. Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context, such as forced transfers, evictions, demolitions and confiscations of homes, are illegal under international humanitarian law. Under international humanitarian law, the destruction of property by an occupying power in occupied territory is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.

¹ UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Demolition Database last accessed 06 February 2022. All information disclosed in this report is susceptible to change at any time depending on new available data.

While the planning and building laws in the West Bank largely benefit the Israeli settlers' population through regulated development, they serve the opposite purpose when applied on Palestinian communities, preventing their development and dispossessing them of their land. Area C, which is under full Israeli control, constitutes 60% of the West Bank and it is also here that the majority of the West Bank's natural resources lie. 60% of Area C is designated as either firing zones, state land, survey land, national parks or nature reserves, thereby blocking Palestinian development including industrial development. In the remaining 40%, Palestinian construction is largely restricted as building permits are almost never granted to Palestinians, leaving them with the only option of building without permits and thus exposing themselves to the threat of demolition.²

According to Israeli authorities, Palestinian homes and other structures in Area C are being demolished on the grounds that they were built without Israeli-issued building permits. As recorded by OCHA, between 1988 and 2016, the Israeli Civil Administration issued over 16,000 demolition orders located in Area C with such justification.³

Demolitions in the West Bank have a devastating, long-lasting social and economic effect on Palestinian families and their children, making them further dependent on humanitarian assistance. In particular, the mental wellbeing of children are being impacted. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, many children suffer the trauma of watching their homes and schools being destroyed. According to OCHA, "the impact on children can be particularly devastating, including depression, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder".⁴

2. GENERAL DEMOLITION FIGURES

2.1. Material Damage: Monthly and Annual Number of Structures demolished or seized

From 1 January to 31 December 2022, a total of 953 structures were demolished or seized throughout the West Bank, of which 143 were located in East Jerusalem, 781 in Area C and 29 in Areas A and B⁵.

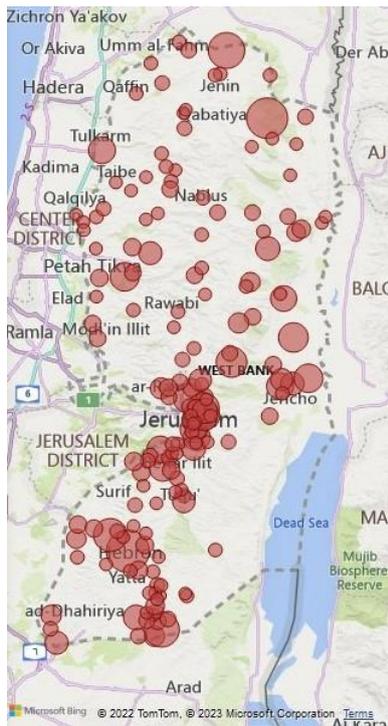
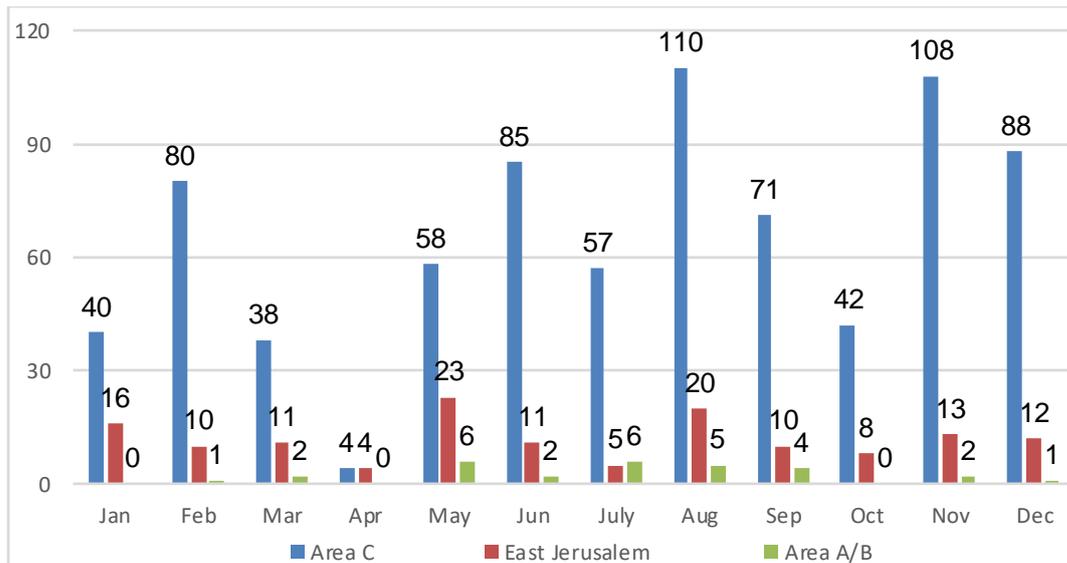
Table 1: Monthly number of structures demolished or seized

² https://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building

³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/most-palestinian-plans-build-area-c-not-approved>

⁴ <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/raided-and-razed/raided-and-razed.pdf>

⁵ Source: UN OCHA



Source: UN OCHA

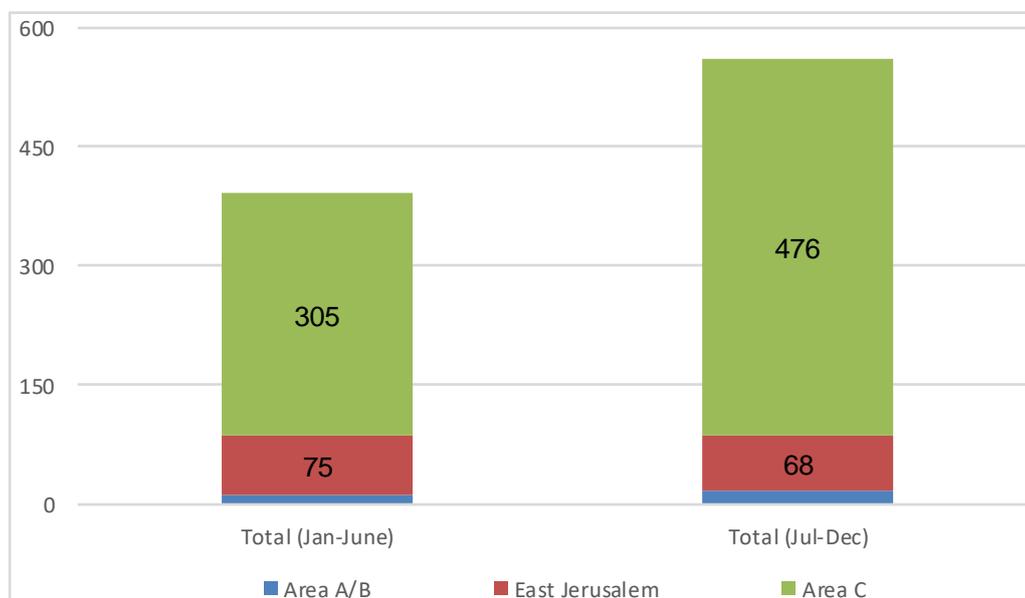
As reflected in Table 1, the number of Palestinian-owned structures demolished or seized in August 2022 (135 structures) was the highest in 2022. More than 80% of the targeted structures in August were located in Area C. August was also the month with the second highest number of demolitions in East Jerusalem (20) and Area A/B (5).

The month of April experienced a relatively low number of demolitions attributed to the month of Ramadan, during which the Israeli authorities customarily halt most demolitions. The number of demolitions in April (8) was three times less than in April of the previous year (24).

The map to the left shows the location of the demolitions and seizures during the reporting period. Demolitions and seizures took place in all governorates, with concentrations in the areas in East Jerusalem and the 'greater Jerusalem' area, the Jordan Valley and the southern Hebron area.

Areas that were particularly affected were Jerusalem (26%), Hebron (22%), Jericho (12%), Bethlehem (8%), Ramallah (7%), Nablus (7%), Jenin (5%), Salbit (5), Tubas (4%), Tulkarem (2%), and Qalqilya (1%)

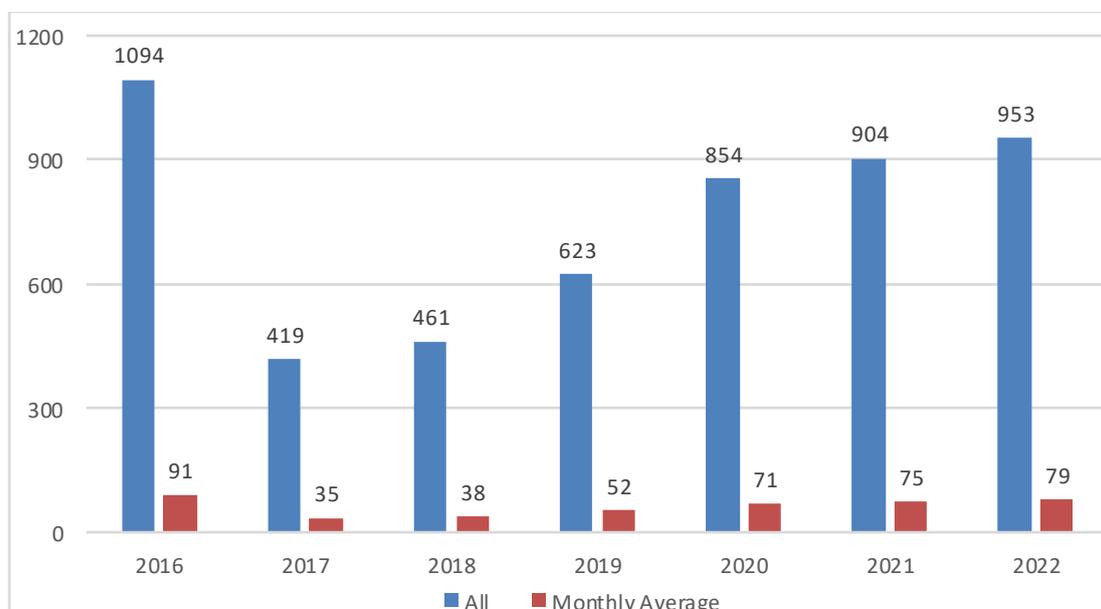
Table 2: Jan-June demolition/seizure in comparison with July-Dec demolition/seizure



Source: UN OCHA

The number of demolitions in second half of the year (Jul-Dec) is 562, representing a 43% increase compared to the first half (Jan-June), which is 391. A reason for this was particularly the increase in demolitions in Area C, rising from 305 in the first half to 476 in the second half. This represents a more than 50% rise in demolitions in the second half of 2022, in comparison to the first half.

Table 3: Annual number of structures demolished or seized, and monthly averages



Source: UN OCHA

Table 3 demonstrates that the number of demolitions in the West Bank has risen continuously over the last 5 years, and is the highest since 2016. In total, 953 structures were demolished or seized, with 781 in Area C, 29 in Area A/B and 143 in East Jerusalem. All but 35 of the structures were targeted for lacking building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Area C and East Jerusalem.⁶

2.2. Human Damage: Monthly and Annual Number of People Displaced and Affected by demolitions or Seizures

Table 4: Monthly number of people displaced⁷ and affected⁸ by demolitions or seizures

2022	All Displaced	All Affected
January	93	163
February	102	696
March	37	289
April	17	7
May	162	7900
June	89	6474
July	81	748
August	135	488
September	57	8784
October	84	178
November	109	382
December	65	2337

Source: UN OCHA

The month of May saw the highest number of displaced people in 2022 (162), with 85 being Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem neighborhoods.

The high number of people affected in September is due to two separate incidents, on 20 September, the Israeli authorities sealed off two artesian water wells in Area B in Kur and Ar Ras both in Tulkarm,

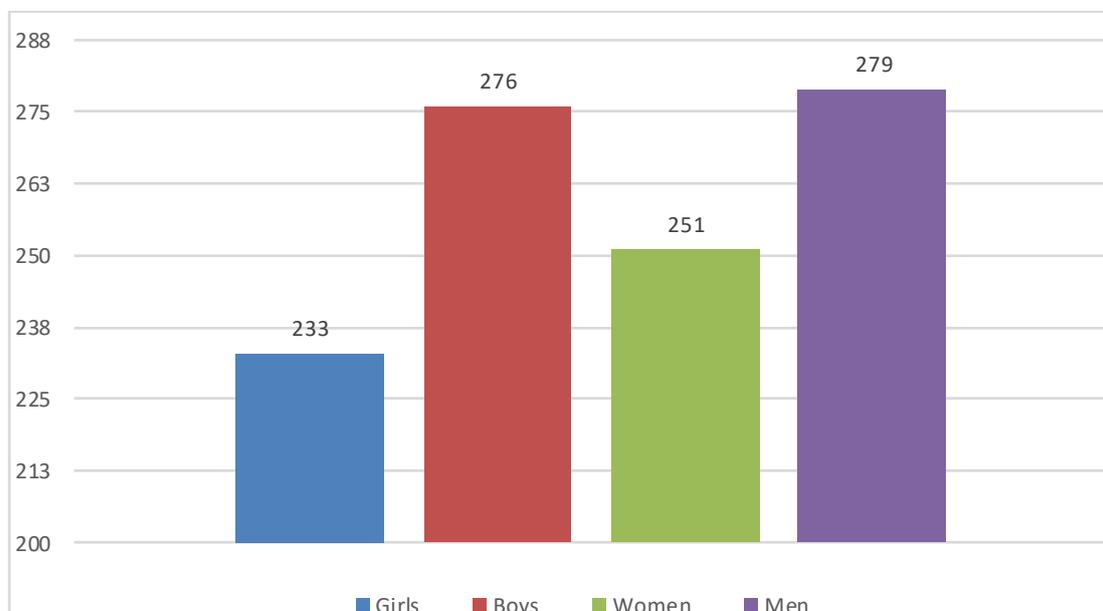
⁶ Source: OCHA

⁷ Includes all people who had a structure used as their habitual place of residence demolished.

⁸ Includes all people who had any of their property, other than their residence, demolished. Displaced and affected are here

without any prior notice. Both water wells are used as the main drinking water source of at least 1,400 Palestinian families in the communities.

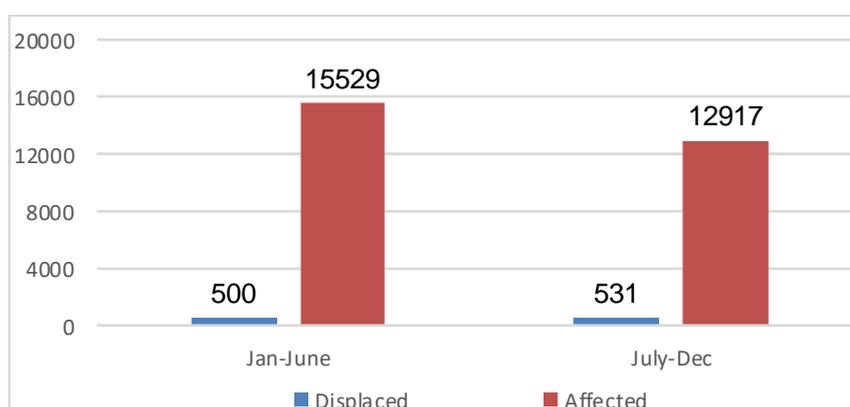
Table 5: Disaggregated Displacement Figures in 2022



Source: UN OCHA

In the year of 2022, 233 girls, 251 women, 279 men and 276 boys were among the displaced, making it a total of 1039. Almost half of the displaced were thus children (see table 5).

Table 6: Number of people displaced or affected between Jan-June and number of people displaced or affected between July-Dec



Source: UN OCHA

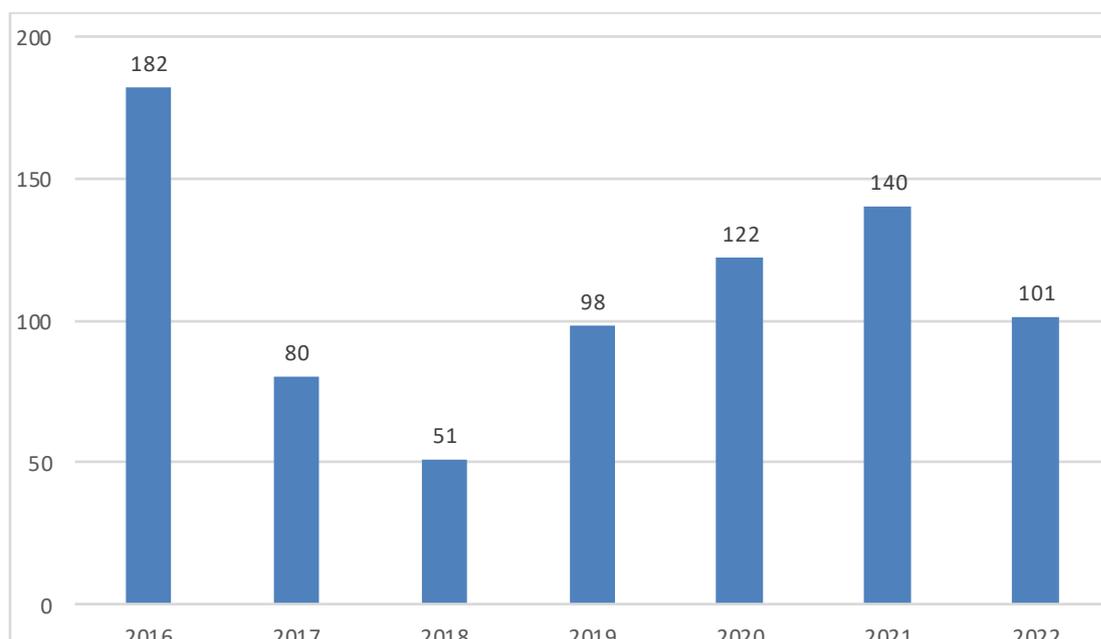
A bird’s-eye view on 2022 reveals that demolitions/seizures of structures resulted in the displacement of 1,031 individuals. This represents a decrease of 14% in comparison to the recorded number of 2021, which was at 1209. The number of individuals affected by demolitions/seizures in 2022, in comparison

to 2021, almost doubled, from 12,704 to 28,446. While the number of displaced people in the second half of 2022 (531) was slightly higher than in the first half (500), the number of affected in the second half of 2022 (12917) was slightly lower compared to the first half (15529) (see Table 6).

3. TARGETED STRUCTURES FUNDED BY THE EU OR EU MEMBER STATES

A total of 101 structures constituting humanitarian assets, including residential and livelihood structures, funded by the EU or its Member States were demolished/seized in 2022. According to OCHA, this represents a 28 percent and 17 percent decline compared with 2021 and 2020, respectively. The material loss of these targeted structures are EUR €337,019, which is higher compared to the two previous years. Between 2016 and 2022, a total of 774 EU-funded structures were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities, representing an accumulative value of €2,447,169. The number of donor-funded aid structures targeted in 2022 (141) was the third highest since 2016, with over seventy percent EU-funded⁹.

Table 7: Annual number of targeted structures funded by EU or EUMS,



Source: UN OCHA

Table 7: Financial Losses of structures targeted

2016	182	€ 557,378
2017	80	€ 272,602
2018	51	€ 168,282

⁹ Source: UN OCHA

2019	98	€ 480,625
2020	122	€ 300,233
2021	140	€ 331,031
2022	101	€337,019
TOTAL	774	€2,447,169

Source: UN OCHA

4. DEVELOPMENTS OF CONCERN IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The following developments are of concern as they negatively affect the lives of Palestinians and contribute to the consolidation of Israel's presence and control of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

4.1. East Jerusalem

A trend continuing since the second half of 2020 was the increase of structures being demolished by their owners, following the receipt of demolition orders, to avoid financial penalties and/or imprisonment and reduce damage to adjacent structures and personal belongings. The proportion of structures demolished or sealed off by their owners in East Jerusalem, following the issuance of demolition orders, reached 51 per cent in 2022, up from an average of 34 per cent in the previous five years. The rise of demolitions by their owners in 2022 is attributed to Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law, transferring authority to intervene from Israeli courts to the Jerusalem Municipality and enabling them to pressure homeowners to demolish their own properties¹⁰.

In 2022, the Al Walajah village in Bethlehem (which falls under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality) has turned back into the spotlight. There is pending risk of demolitions in Al Walajah, which is exacerbated by the fact that the villagers are not allowed to actively engage in urban planning and propose alternatives. Thirty-eight homes are under threat of being demolished. In 2022 seven structures were demolished in the village, while 10 structures were demolished in 2021 and 19 structures in 2020. In the UN Secretary General's report from 2022 on Israeli settlements, Al Walajah was highlighted as over 300 Palestinians remain at risk of forcible transfer.¹¹

In 2022, as in 2021, the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods of East Jerusalem were making headlines due to the forced eviction cases that families were facing in these areas. Even though pending eviction court cases, initiated by the settler organizations and associates, were not resulting in forced eviction so far, they were placing many Palestinian families at risk of eviction and are thus of particular concern in the near future. In both neighborhoods, Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, Palestinian families are brought to court on the basis of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law of 1970,

¹⁰ OCHA Demolition Report for November-December 2022

¹¹ Source: UNGA A/77/493

allowing Jewish Israeli people to claim ownership of Palestinian-owned assets in East Jerusalem on the argument that they were in possession by Jewish people before 1948¹².

According to OCHA, at least one third of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack building permits, affecting a total of 100,000 inhabitants¹³. Such building permits are almost impossible to obtain. According to Peace Now, between 2009 and 2018, 98 construction permits for Palestinians were issued out of 4,422 requests for permits that were filed.

4.2 Area C

The numbers and figures on Area C demolitions reinforce the already existing trend of rising demolitions and seizures since 2016.

In Area C, demolition orders and waves of demolitions in the communities of Masafer Yatta in the South Hebron Hill became of great concern. On 4 May 2022, the HCJ ruled that there were no legal barriers to the planned expulsion of Palestinian residents from Masafer Yatta to make way for military training, effectively placing them at imminent risk of forced evictions, arbitrary displacement, and forcible transfer. Dozens of structures have been demolished since 4 May, and several demolition orders were delivered. Currently in Masafer Yatta, 215 Palestinian households, including about 1,150 people, of which 569 are children, are at imminent risk of being forcibly transferred.

Additionally, it is close to impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits for construction in Area C. Between 2016-2020, there were 2,550 permit requests, with only 24 of them being accepted; less than one percent of permits were granted over a five-year span.¹⁴ In contrast, in 2019 and 2020, the Israeli authorities approved plans for 16,098 units in settlements and issued permits for at least 2,233 housing units.¹⁵

Of particular concern are the rise of targeted structures located in Bedouin and Herding communities in Area C. The victims of demolitions are among the most vulnerable, in most cases without access to health, education, water and electricity infrastructure. In November 2022, for instance, 30% of the structures targeted structures were in five Palestinian Bedouin or herding communities in the northern Jordan Valley and in the Jerusalem periphery¹⁶. In particular focus in 2022 was the herding community of Ras Al Tin, north of Ramallah. In early July 2022, 19 Palestinian households comprising about 100 people, mostly children, left the herding community with most of them relocating to Area B, citing occupation-related coercive measures imposed on them, including the community demolition in July 2021¹⁷.

A continuing trend that is observable in Area C is the seizure of structures based on Military Order 1797, which provides only a 96-hour notice and very limited grounds for legally challenging a demolition. A total of 228 Palestinian-owned structures, including one school, have been demolished based on this order, since it came into effect in July 2019.

The increase in demolitions in Area C was also accompanied by a spike in the scale and severity of settler violence. UN OCHA recorded 849 incidents of settler violence, resulting in casualties and/or

¹² <http://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Action-Alert-EJ-displacements-PN-IA-ES-1.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/wadi-yasul-community-risk-mass-displacement>

¹⁴ <https://bimkom.org/eng/records-of-recent-demolitions-demolition-orders-and-building-permits/>

¹⁵ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/approvals-for-palestinians-in-area-c-2009-2020>

¹⁶ Source: OCHA Demolition Report, November 2022

¹⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/about-100-palestinians-leave-ras-tin>

property damage, including incidents of settler violence involving Israeli Security Forces. This is the highest number since OCHA started recording incidents involving settlers in 2006. 621 of these incidents resulted in damage, 124 resulted in casualties and 104 resulted in both.

Worth noting is also the high amount of Palestinian schools at risk of demolition in Area C. In 2022, Israeli authorities ordered the demolition/stop work order of at least 6 schools in Area C, impacting over 206 students (102 girls) and 41 teachers. This makes 58 schools (50 in Areas C, and 8 in EJ), serving around 6,550 children (2790 girls) and 700 teachers (379 female), at risk of demolition (fully or partially) by Israeli authorities. As a result, more than 185 Class-hours were lost in 2022.¹⁸

4.3 Area A and B

In 2022, Area A and B experienced an increase in demolitions of structures based on punitive grounds. During 2022, eleven (11) Palestinian-owned homes and three other structures were demolished by the Israeli authorities on punitive grounds, compared with three in all of 2021 and seven in 2020. These include nine structures in Area A and four in Area B and one in East Jerusalem. Punitive house demolitions are often justified by Israel on the basis of counter-terrorism measures. According to OHCHR, these punitive demolitions are a form of collective punishment, prohibited under international law through Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and often trigger confrontations and clashes between the Palestinian communities and Israeli forces. In 2022, clashes erupted during demolitions, in which Israeli forces shot and killed five Palestinians, including one child and injured 88 others.

Another major trend observed in 2022 was the sealing off of artesian water wells by the Israeli authorities in Area B of the West Bank. In 2022, a total of four wells were sealed off in comparison with two in the past four years. The four wells were the main drinking water source for at least 3,500 Palestinian families in nine different communities.

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

During the reporting period, the issue of demolitions and seizures continued to be raised by the EU with relevant interlocutors through various diplomatic channels. In addition, the following actions took place.

HQ Statements:

- On 19 January 2022, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a statement on developments in occupied East Jerusalem, stating that settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions are illegal under international law.¹⁹
- On 25 November 2022, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a statement on the demolition of the donor-funded Sfai school in Masafer Yatta on 23 November 2022. In the statement, the EU “calls on Israel to halt all demolitions and evictions, which will only increase the suffering of the Palestinian population and further escalate an already tense environment.”²⁰

¹⁸ Source: oPt Education Cluster

¹⁹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/israel-palestine-statement-spokesperson-developments-occupied-east-jerusalem_en

²⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/palestine-statement-spokesperson-israeli-demolition-school-masafer-yatta_en

- On 1 December, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarcic, highlighted the increase in violence including demolitions and confiscation of humanitarian assets and the need to get the Middle East Peace Process moving.²¹

Local Public Communication

- On 16 February 2022, the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza issued a press release on a visit with EU Heads of Mission and like-minded countries to the donor-funded Ein Samiya school amid threats of its demolition. In the press release, Representatives from the EU and likeminded countries urge Israel to halt demolitions, evictions and confiscations on occupied Palestinian land, including of donor funded projects.²²
- On 15 March, the EUREP, Member States and like-minded countries attended the Israeli Supreme Court hearing on the permanent expulsion of more than 1300 Palestinians from their homes in Masafer Yatta in South Hebron Hills, declared part of a firing zone for Israeli military purposes.²³
- In April, EU missions attended the magistrate court hearing on the Salem family's pending eviction from Sheikh Jarrah.²⁴
- On 7 June 2022, the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza issued a press release on a visit with EU Heads of Mission and like-minded countries to residents in Wadi Qaddoum, part of Silwan in East Jerusalem, where 74 Palestinians are at risk of imminent displacement. The EU reminded that the continued practice of demolitions and evictions in occupied East Jerusalem is in violation of international humanitarian law and must cease.²⁵
- On 8 July 2022, the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza issued a press release on its visit with EU Heads of Mission and like-minded countries to Masafer Yatta, Area C where some 1200 Palestinians, including over 500 children, are threatened by mass demolition, displacement and forced transfer. During the visit, the EU Representative stated that "by pursuing these actions notably in Area C representing 60% of the West Bank, Israel is not only acting in contravention to its obligations as an occupying power but is also taking us further away from a two state solution with a viable and contiguous Palestinian state at its core".²⁶
- On 12 August 2022, the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza issued a press release on its visit with EU Heads of Mission and like-minded countries to the school of Ein Samiya, under imminent threat of demolition. This was the second visit to the donor-funded school in 2022, during which the EU Representative iterated that "Israel as the occupying power has the obligation to protect the population, including children rights".²⁷
- On 28 September 2022, the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza issued a press release on its visit with EU Heads of Mission and like-minded countries to Khallet a-

²¹ <https://twitter.com/JanezLenarcic/status/1598336005173612544>

²² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/european-union-and-11_en

²³ <https://twitter.com/EUpalestinians/status/1503798242332577793?cxt=HHwWgsC4gZaiyN4pAAAA>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/EUpalestinians/status/1518573305594318849?cxt=HHwWgsC41YWYh5MqAAAAOn>

²⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/heads-mission-3_en

²⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/heads-mission-4_en?s=206

²⁷ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/heads-mission-5_en?s=206

Dabe' and a-Tuwani in Masafer Yatta, Area C. The EU Representative commented on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation since his last visit in July.²⁸

- On 19 December, EU Heads of Missions and like-minded countries visited Hebron and met with Palestinians affected by demolitions, particularly students affected by the demolition of an EU funded school in Masafer Yatta on 23 November.²⁹

²⁸ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/heads-mission-6_en?s=206

²⁹ <https://twitter.com/EUpalestinians/status/1605182309631664129>