



Right Hon Philip Hammond MP  
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**For the urgent attention of: Right Hon Philip Hammond MP**

19 August 2015

Dear Mr. Hammond,

**Re: Forcible displacement of 78 Palestinian Bedouin refugees in Area C of the West Bank on 17 August 2015**

We write to urgently express our deep concern regarding the forcible displacement earlier this week of 78 Palestinian Bedouin refugees, including 49 children, in Area C of the West Bank. This appalling development takes place against the context of the Israeli government's unlawful plan to forcibly relocate as many as 7,000 Palestinian Bedouin from 46 communities in the occupied West Bank.

On Monday 17 August 2015, the Israeli Civil Administration carried out demolitions in four vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin refugee communities in Area C, near East Jerusalem: Khan al Ahmar Abu Falah, Wadi Sneysel, Bir Miskoob and Az Zayyem Bedouin. A total of 22 structures were demolished, resulting in, according to UN records, the largest forcible displacement of Palestinians in nearly three years. There are concerns also rising over reports of new displacements in the Jordan Valley community of Fasayil al Wusta.

The four affected communities are among 46 located in the central West Bank that are included in Israeli plans to transfer as many as 7,000 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.

In response to the forcible displacement this week, the Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory, Robert Piper, said:

"The strategic implications of these demolitions are clear. 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.”

This UN statement reiterates the concern raised in our previous letter to you, dated 7 July 2015, that the Israeli government's forcible relocation plan includes transferring Palestinian communities from the “E1 area” in order to expand the illegal settlement of Ma’ale Adumim. Such a move would destroy any chance of a viable Palestinian state by effecting cutting the West Bank in two.

In the Foreign Office's considered response to our letter, dated 30 July 2015, it is stated:

“The government shares your concerns. During Tobias Ellwood's, the FCO minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East, visit to the region in October 2014, he made clear the UK's deep concern about proposals to relocate Bedouin communities in the E1 area, and to build settlements which would put in serious jeopardy the prospect of a viable Palestinian state. He also emphasised the importance of these communities being treated in accordance with international humanitarian law.”

LPHR strongly welcomes the deep concern with which the British government is treating this significant legal and human rights issue. In accordance with this position, and the appalling new developments this week in pursuance of the Israeli government's unlawful forcible relocation plan, we would be grateful if you could:

1. Urgently issue a public statement on the grave human rights issue of the Israeli government's unlawful forcible relocation plan, including a condemnation of the forcible displacement of 78 Palestinian Bedouin refugees carried out this week and a call for an immediate freeze on demolitions in the West Bank; and
2. Call directly in communications with the Israeli government to immediately freeze all settlement activity and demolition orders, and cancel all transfer plans.

We would be grateful for your careful consideration of this urgent request.

Yours sincerely,

Tareq Shrourou  
**Director, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights**

**CC:**

Mr Tobias Ellwood MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office;

Ms. Charlotte Wood, British Consulate General Jerusalem.