



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

07 July 2015

Dear Mr. Hammond,

**Re: Impending demolition of Susiya and the mass forced transfer of its residents**

We write to urgently express our deep concern about developments that have taken place in the last week regarding the Israeli government's plan to demolish the entire village of Susiya in the southern West Bank and consequential mass forced transfer of all its residents.

At the beginning of May 2015, the Israeli High Court refused a petition for a restraining order against outstanding demolition orders in Susiya. The refusal means the Israeli Civil Administration is now able to implement outstanding orders against the entire community. If these demolitions go ahead, over 250 people will be evicted from the place in which they have lived since before the occupation of the West Bank started in 1967.

On June 16 2015, Israeli officials visited Susiya to map the village ahead of its demolition and international monitors have reported that military and demolition equipment started to arrive outside Susiya on July 2 2015. Based on past experience, local residents fear this means the Israeli authorities are planning to demolish the village in the near future and hand the land over to illegal Israeli settlers. Once this has happened, the families of Susiya will be left homeless in harsh desert conditions.

The Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem, recently stated that:

*“Behind the Israeli authorities’ behavior is the aspiration, declared by Israeli officials at various times, to control these areas in order to facilitate circumstances that would allow their annexation in a peace agreement, and until then, de facto annexation. The Israeli authorities’ policy contradicts its obligation to meet the needs of the residents of the occupied territories and constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits their forced transfer.”*



Alongside this, the Israeli government is advancing plans to forcibly relocate as many as 7,000 Palestinian Bedouin from 46 communities in the occupied West Bank. The UN Secretary-General has stated that the Israeli government's implementation of this relocation plan would amount to individual and mass forcible transfers and evictions, representing a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The plan includes transferring Palestinian communities from the politically sensitive "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.

The Israeli government has taken a number of steps recently to advance the plan, including starting work at one of the sites to which Palestinians will be forcibly transferred and appointing a retired General to liaise with affected communities and oversee the transfer process.

Given the urgency of the situation, we would be grateful if you could:

1. Issue a public statement on the urgent and grave human rights issue concerning the Israeli government's plan to demolish the entire village of Susiya; and
2. Call directly on 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.