



Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Foreign Secretary  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
London SW1A 2AH

19 October 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Requesting the UK government respond to the imminent demolition of Ras al-Tin primary school by Israel's military authorities in the occupied West Bank**

We write to request the UK's urgent intervention to the proposed imminent demolition of a newly constructed school by Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank. The authorisation to demolish Ras al-Tin primary school, east of Ramallah, may be exercised at any moment as an Israeli court refused to extend an injunction halting demolition. The protection of the injunction ceased on 14 October 2020, according to Save the Children.

At the outset it is relevant to state that the United Kingdom co-provided humanitarian funding for the construction of this European-funded primary school, which currently educates up to 30 children between the ages of 6 and 12, with a capacity to serve 50 children. It also relevant to note that Israel's military authorities targeting of Ras al-Tin school forms part of a deeply disturbing and systematic plan to effectively compromise the education and well-being of Palestinian children. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, there are presently 52 schools in the West Bank subject to demolition or 'stop-work' orders, and Israel has this year partially or fully demolished three schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The Ras al-Tin school educates Palestinian Bedouin children. Is the only primary school for 35 Bedouin families in the small Ras al-Tin community located in Area C of the occupied West Bank. If destroyed, the children would be forced to make arduous journeys, in excess of six miles in total each day, in order to attend another school.

Between 31 August and 10 September 2020, the Israeli military confiscated construction material and tools from the primary school on four separate occasions, severely disrupting the school's ability to teach its students. Illustratively, the roof of the school, desks and chairs were seized. The Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem, reports that the students were forced to study under the scorching sun as they sat on the ground.

The justification offered for such measures is the absence of an Israeli-issued building permit. It is materially relevant to note that 98% of Palestinian requests for building permits in Area C of the occupied West Bank are denied, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council. This strikingly high number clearly indicates a policy and practice to systematically deny necessary Palestinian construction by Israel's military authorities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified by Israel in 1991. It applies to Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory, including those at



Ras al-Tin primary school in the West Bank. Article 28 of the CRC promulgates the obligation that Israel, as an occupying power, must recognise the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity, and to strive to make primary education compulsory and available free to all.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also applies to the actions of an occupying power, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice. Article 13 of the ICESCR recognises the right of everyone to education, affirming it should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity.

We are deeply concerned that the Israeli government is failing to engage with its legal obligations in relation to the above education-related rights, by failing to ensure and protect access to education for all children. Instances such as the proposed demolition of Ras al-Tin school are a further example of the Israeli Government working in direct contravention of international law. Save the Children has asserted that “the demolition of the [Ras al-Tin] school would be a serious violation of international humanitarian law.”

We note that Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated how “vitally important” it is for children to return to school after Covid-19 related school closures. The Bedouin children at Ras al-Tin primary school have already been subjected to pandemic-related school closures and the demolition of their school would have a devastating effect on their education and well-being. The Norwegian Refugee Council has expressed their concern over “some of the most vulnerable children” being denied the basic right to education.

The above reinforces the acute need for UK government action as outlined in our following suggested recommendations.

1. Take urgent steps to urge the Government of Israel to rescind the planned imminent demolition of the Ras al-Tin primary school which has been co-financed by the UK Government, in both your bilateral relations and an unequivocal public statement; and
2. Take urgent steps to urge the Government of Israel to rescind all plans by Israel's military authorities to dismantle schools and educational facilities in the occupied Palestinian territory, and to further urge its compliance with its international legal duties to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of Palestinian children to education.

We would be grateful for your careful consideration of the above and for your written reply.

Yours sincerely,

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**Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights**