



# COMMUNITIES IN THE JERUSALEM PERIPHERY AT RISK OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT

JUNE 2013

## KEY FACTS

- Around 2,300 Palestinians, two thirds of them children, reside in about 20 small herding communities in the hills east of Jerusalem, in Area C.
- Over 80% of the residents are refugees, a status they acquired following their eviction from their place of residence in southern Israel in the early 1950's.
- The communities have gradually lost access to much of their grazing land due to settlement expansion.
- Most of the families have pending demolition orders against their homes, none of the communities have been connected to the electricity network and only half are connected to the water network.
- Most of these communities are located within what have subsequently become the municipal boundaries of the Ma'ale Adummim settlement (pop. 36,000) - an area similar in size to the municipal area of Tel Aviv (pop. 405,000).
- Herding communities in Area C are some of the most vulnerable in the West Bank –about 34% are food insecure.
- Between 2008 and 2012, over 4,000 Palestinians, mostly from herding communities, were forcibly displaced due to the demolition of their homes on the grounds that they have no building permits.
- More than 520,000 Israeli civilians living in Israeli settlements, built in contravention of international law, receive preferential treatment in terms of the allocation of land, planning and provision of services.

**1. Small herding communities in the hills to the east of Jerusalem are at risk of forced displacement due to a “relocation” plan advanced by the Israeli authorities.** The authorities have justified this on grounds that the residents do not possess title over the land. The residents, however, oppose this relocation and insist on their right to return to their original homes and lands in southern Israel. Until this is achieved, they have requested from the international community protection and assistance in their current location, including adequate planning and permits for their homes and livelihood-related properties.

**2. A combination of measures adopted by the Israeli authorities have created a coercive environment for the communities.** Measures have included restricted access to grazing land and markets for their products, which have undermined their livelihoods and increased their dependency on humanitarian assistance; demolition and threat of demolition of homes, schools and animal shelters; and the corresponding restrictions on obtaining building permits. The authorities have also failed to protect the communities from intimidation and attacks by Israeli settlers.

**3. The “relocation” plan, in its current form, raises serious legal and humanitarian concerns.** There has been almost no consultation with the affected communities, who were told that they have no choice but to leave. The Israeli authorities have allocated public (“state”) land in two sites designated for the relocation, and prepared planning schemes, which are at final stages of approval. However, both sites raise serious concerns:

the limited availability of grazing land at the proposed two sites will undermine the traditional livelihoods and culture of the communities, as was the case for 150 families who were relocated from this area in the late 1990s. One of the sites is also located next to a refuse dump site, raising serious health concerns.

**4. The area where the communities currently reside has been allocated for the expansion of Israeli settlements.** This includes the E1 plan, which entails the construction of thousands of new settlement housing and commercial units, creating a continuous built-up area between the Ma'ale Adummim settlement and Jerusalem. While this plan has been frozen since the late 1990's, the Government of Israel recently announced its reactivation. The affected area is also planned to be surrounded by the Barrier. If implemented, these plans will undermine Palestinian presence in the area, further disconnect East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, and disrupt the territorial contiguity of the occupied territory.

**5. The UN Secretary-General has stated that the implementation of the proposed “relocation” would amount to individual and mass forcible transfers and forced evictions,** prohibited under international humanitarian law and human rights law.<sup>1</sup> As an occupying power, Israel has an obligation to protect the Palestinian civilian population and to administer the territory for the benefit of that population. The destruction or confiscation of private property, including homes, as well as the transfer of settlers into occupied territory, is also prohibited.

1. Report by the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly, A/67/372, 14 September 2012, para. 37.





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