Press release

Jerusalem

24 OCTOBER 2016

EU Diplomats visit communities facing the threat of demolition and displacement in the Jerusalem periphery

A group of EU diplomats based in Jerusalem and Ramallah, including some Heads of Mission, visited today communities facing the threat of demolition and displacement in the Jerusalem periphery. The objective of this field trip was to gain a first-hand impression of the coercive environment these communities find themselves in, to be informed of recent developments, to demonstrate concern at the humanitarian impact of any demolitions and forced transfer of population, and to express the EU's commitment to a sustainable future for the Palestinian communities in Area C. During the visit, the group met with community leaders who briefed them about demolitions taking place in their communities, including of the local schools.

The group started its visit in Abu Nuwar, a community which is designated for relocation by the Israeli authorities. So far in 2016, the Israeli authorities have demolished 10 housing units in the community, leaving 26 people homeless, including 17 children. In February a number of caravans being donated to the local school were confiscated. The alternative structure that was constructed instead was demolished on 27 September, leaving pupils without shelter.

The group then continued to Khan Al-Ahmar, where they were briefed by a community representative in the local school. Established in June 2009, the building is made of mud and rubber tires. Before the school was opened, the village children had to go to schools far away, making trips that were both costly and risky. The residents of Khan-al-Ahmar have been in a years-long legal struggle against Israel's intention to demolish the school. Tomorrow, the Israeli State will respond to the High Court, indicating its intentions for the future of the school.

In the Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 18 January 2016, the EU reiterated its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. Moreover, the Council Conclusions stressed the need for a fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, which will significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

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