Posted on 4 February 2018

Statement by acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Roberto Valent, on the Israeli authorities' destruction of donor-funded classrooms in the Palestinian community of Abu Nuwar

I am deeply concerned by the Israeli authorities' demolition this morning of two donor-funded classrooms (3rd and 4th grade), serving 26 Palestinian school children in the Bedouin and refugee community of Abu Nuwar, located in Area C on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The demolition was carried out on grounds of lack of Israeli-issued permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain.



Abu Nuwar, 4 February 2018

Abu Nuwar is one of the most vulnerable communities in need of humanitarian assistance in the occupied West Bank. The conditions it faces also represent those of many Palestinian communities, where a combination of Israeli policies and practices – including demolitions and restricted access to basic services, such as education – have created a coercive environment that violates the human rights of residents and generates a risk of forcible transfer. This is the sixth demolition or confiscation incident in Abu Nuwar school by the Israeli authorities since February 2016.

As in Abu Nuwar, hundreds of children attending one of at least 45 schools in the West Bank (37 in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem) with pending demolition orders, are living in instability, with the specter of school demolition ever-present, threatening their access to education. Other children in Area C communities lacking a primary school often must walk or travel long distances to reach their schools and are exposed to settler

harassment or searches at checkpoints. These constraints undermine the quality of education and increase the chances of early dropout.

I call on the Israeli authorities to fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and immediately cease all practices that are directly or indirectly generating a risk of forcible transfer for Palestinians in various parts of the West Bank, including the destruction of schools and related property.

END

Background

Abu Nuwar is a Palestinian Bedouin community in Area C, with approximately 670 Palestinian residents (88% refugees), part of whom reside in the community on a seasonal basis. The community is one of the 46 Bedouin communities in the central West Bank at-risk of forcible transfer because of the coercive environment exerted on them, including a “relocation” plan advanced by the Israeli authorities. It is also one of the 18 Palestinian Bedouin communities in the eastern Jerusalem governorate that are located in, or next to an area slated for the E1 settlement plan, aimed at creating a continuous built-up area between Ma’ale Adumim settlement and East Jerusalem.

International humanitarian law prohibits the individual or mass forcible transfer of the population of an occupied territory regardless of the motive. Such transfer is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention thus involving individual criminal responsibility. The destruction of property in an occupied territory is also prohibited, unless absolutely required for military operations.