Statement by the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, Simon Coveney T.D. on Abu Nuwar and Khan al-Ahmar

The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney T.D., today condemned the demolitions and forced evictions at the Palestinian community of Abu Nuwar, where nineteen structures have been bulldozed by the Israeli authorities in the last few hours. He also expressed extreme concern about the situation at the village of Khan al Ahmar, where the community is at high risk of forcible transfer.

Speaking today, the Tánaiste said:

"I am deeply dismayed to learn of the demolitions carried out by the Israeli authorities in Abu Nuwar. Today 51 people have been victims of forced eviction, including 33 children. I am also extremely worried about the imminent threat to the Bedouin community of Khan al Ahmar. I have seen reports of violent attacks on villagers and their supporters by Israeli security forces today, causing some to be hospitalised. Logistical preparations have begun for the demolition of the village and forcible transfer of the residents to another location, following the publication of plans for expansion of a nearby Israeli settlement.

"The eviction of families and demolition of their homes is an action which has a strong historical resonance in Ireland, and which brings discredit on Israel. Some of these most vulnerable people had already been expelled once by Israel from their homes and should have been protected by the occupation authorities, not subject to further injustice. The villagers have not consented to moving, and the planning regime makes it virtually impossible for them to obtain planning permission for housing or other structures in their village.

"International humanitarian law clearly prohibits the destruction of private property and the forcible transfer of the population of an occupied territory.

"Ireland has made these points clearly to Israeli representatives. On 31 May last, I spoke publicly about my concerns about Khan al Ahmar, and called on the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions of Palestinian property and the removal of Palestinian communities. I have also made Ireland's views on settlements known directly to the Prime Minister of Israel. I know these views have been strongly echoed in the Oireachtas.

"It is deeply disappointing that Israel is nonetheless proceeding with this reprehensible action."

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