UN officials call on Israeli authorities to halt plans for demolitions in Sur Bahir

Statement by Mr. Jamie McGoldrick (Humanitarian Coordinator), Ms. Gwyn Lewis (Director of West Bank Operations for UNRWA), and Mr. James Heenan (Head of OHCHR in the occupied Palestinian territory)

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We are following very closely developments in the Sur Bahir area of the Jerusalem governorate. Seventeen Palestinians, including nine Palestine refugees, face the risk of displacement, and over 350 others risk massive property loss, due to the Israeli authorities' intention to demolish 10 buildings, including around 70 apartments, due to their proximity to the West Bank Barrier. One month ago, following the exhaustion of almost all domestic legal remedies, Israeli forces sent the residents, a "Notice of Intent to Demolish" which will expire tomorrow, 18 July.

Demolitions and forced evictions are some of the multiple pressures generating a risk of forcible transfer for many Palestinians in the West Bank. Residents of East Jerusalem and adjacent areas have been particularly affected, with a significant rise in demolitions there in 2019.

Amongst the seventeen Palestinians now at risk of displacement, nine of them are Palestine refugees, including an elderly couple and five children. For many refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacement is both a living memory and an imminent risk. Displacement, particularly for the most vulnerable, is traumatic and has lasting consequences.

We join others in the international community in calling on Israel to halt plans to demolish these and other structures and to implement fair planning policies that allow Palestinian residents of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the ability to meet their housing and development needs, in line with its obligations as an occupying power.

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For more on Sur Bahir demolitions, see OCHA oPt article, Threat of Demolitions in East Jerusalem.

For detailed data on demolitions, see the West Bank Demolitions and Displacement data set.