



The Civic Coalition for Jerusalem
Press Release 004
For Immediate Release
2 August 2009

Forcible Evictions and Demolitions Displace Over 70 Palestinian Residents of Sheikh Jarrah

At approximately 4:15 AM on Sunday 2 August 2009 dozens of Israeli police, accompanied by members of the Israeli occupation forces, forcibly evicted eight Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem. According to information gathered by the Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation authorities arrived at just after 4:00 am and began smashing the windows of the residential unit before breaking down the doors and forcibly removing approximately 70 members of the Al-Ghawi and Hanoun families. In addition, Israeli occupation authorities also removed numerous international solidarity activists living with the families and confiscated their mobile phones.

This morning evictions represent one of 28 residential units in Sheikh Jarrah threatened with eviction and demolition. Both the District Court and the High Court of Justice have justified these evictions by declaring that the land the houses are built on is disputed. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) built the houses under a joint construction project and the Jordanian government in 1956, 11 years prior to the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem. The houses were given to the families - both of which were expelled and dispossessed from the territory that became the State of Israel during the Nakba of 1948.

In addition to these evictions, at approximately 5:30 am this morning, Israeli occupation authorities also demolished the Al-Kurd family protest tent for the sixth time since the family was forcibly evicted from their Sheikh Jarrah home in November 2008. Once again, the demolition was undertaken on the pretext that the tent was constructed without a building permit and therefore was an "illegal structure". The unrelenting campaign of forcible eviction and demolition in Sheikh Jarrah threatens 51 Palestinian families - amounting to over 500 hundred residents - with displacement, in order to clear the way for the construction of a new Israeli settlement: Shimon HaTzadik.

It is incontrovertible that East Jerusalem is occupied territory, rendering the Palestinian population as protected persons and Israel as the Occupying Power under international humanitarian law. The destruction and confiscation of private property not justified by military necessity, and the transfer of the Occupying Power's population into territory it occupies, is explicitly prohibited under international humanitarian law. Additionally, the right to adequate housing is firmly embedded as a fundamental guarantee under international human rights law. The Israeli occupation authorities campaign of eviction and demolition in Sheikh Jarrah amounts to the forcible transfer of protected persons within and from occupied territory; this in turn amounts to a war crime under international humanitarian law.

The Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem deplores and condemns the ubiquitous eviction and demolition campaign employed by the Israeli occupation authorities in Sheikh Jarrah. This campaign is part of a broader campaign of the Israeli occupation authorities to reduce and restrict the Palestinian presence in occupied East Jerusalem and further consolidate Israel claim to sovereignty over the occupied City. The Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem calls upon the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to engage their own clearly defined legal obligations to hold Israel accountable to their obligations under international law.

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