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One Year Report on Demolitions and Seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem
Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2023 ¹

Summary

Demolitions are a central component of Israel's settlement policy in the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, aiming at consolidating control over the land and limiting Palestinian development. **In 2023, a total of 1.177 structures were demolished or seized** throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, **the highest number recorded since 2016**. 19% of demolitions took place in East Jerusalem, 23% in Areas A and B, and 58% in Area C. **In total, 2.296 individuals have been displaced and 439.875 affected as a result of demolitions**. 76% of those structures were targeted for lacking Israeli building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Area C and East Jerusalem.

After 7 October, the violence in the West Bank intensified sharply, resulting in a surge of demolitions and displacement. **19% of the demolitions were partially or entirely demolished as a result of Israeli military operations**, especially in highly populated areas such as Jenin and Tulkarem, affecting almost 400.000 Palestinians. Additionally, **settler violence surged and access restrictions were intensified, displacing 1,539 Palestinians, including 756 children**. 78% of the displacements due to settler violence in 2023 occurred after 7 October.

Punitive demolitions in Areas A and B, where authorities demolish the homes of relatives of Palestinians accused of harming or attempting to harm Israeli civilians or security personnel, rose significantly. **In 2023, 24 such homes were demolished, more than double the number from the previous year**.

In Area C, **nearly one-third of the 681 demolitions affected vulnerable Bedouin and herding communities**. Additionally, many Palestinian schools are under threat of demolition.

East Jerusalem witnessed a doubling of demolitions in the first quarter of 2023 compared to 2022, reaching the highest levels since 2019. Throughout the year, 140 housing units were destroyed, alongside a continued rise in self-demolitions due to Israeli financial and legal pressures. Many Palestinian families remain at risk of eviction, particularly in the neighborhoods of Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, and al-Walaja.

Of the structures targeted in the twelve-month reporting period, 78 structures were funded by the EU or EU Member States (valued at EUR €248,086).

¹ UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Demolition Database last accessed 3 October 2024. All information disclosed in this report is susceptible to change at any time depending on new available data.

1. INTRODUCTION

Israel's settlement policy, which encompasses forced transfers, evictions, demolitions, and confiscations of homes, remains illegal under international humanitarian law. The destruction of property by an occupying power in occupied territory is prohibited, except where rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. However, planning and building laws in the West Bank continue to favor Israeli settlers through regulated development while simultaneously undermining Palestinian communities by restricting growth and dispossessing them of their land.

Area C, which is under full Israeli control, constitutes 60% of the West Bank and it is also here that the majority of the West Bank's natural resources lie. 60% of Area C is designated as either firing zones, state land, survey land, archeological sites, national parks or nature reserves, thereby blocking Palestinian development, including industrial development. In the remaining 40%, Palestinian construction is largely restricted as building permits are almost never granted to Palestinians. In July 2023, Minister Bezalel Smotrich reported in a Knesset meeting that 95% of building permit applications submitted by Palestinians in Area C were rejected. This leaves Palestinians with the only option of building without permits and thus exposing themselves to the threat of demolition.²

House demolitions are not a recent development but an enduring reality in the occupied Palestinian territory since the start of Israel's military occupation in 1967. According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, more than 56,500 Palestinian homes have since been destroyed by Israeli authorities, reflecting a long-standing pattern of displacement and disruption across Palestinian communities.³ Demolitions in the West Bank have a profound and lasting social and economic impact on Palestinian families, further entrenching their dependence on humanitarian and development assistance. The mental well-being of children is especially affected. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, children often suffer from trauma due to witnessing the destruction of their homes and schools. According to OCHA, "the impact on children can be particularly devastating, including depression, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder".⁴

In 2023, the demolition of Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued unabatedly, leading to significant hardship for Palestinian communities. The sharp escalation of violence after the Hamas attack on 7 October dramatically accelerated demolitions linked to military operations, settler violence and punitive demolitions, with the trend expected to continue in 2024. Large-scale military actions, particularly in densely populated refugee camps, forced many residents from their homes due to demolitions or left them to contend with damaged infrastructure, such as water and electricity cuts, and road destruction. Punitive demolitions more than doubled compared to 2022, reflecting a marked increase in these practices. Additionally, 2023 saw record levels of settler violence, with an average of three incidents per day, surging to seven per day in the weeks following 7 October. This violence contributed substantially to the coercive environment faced by many Palestinian communities. The dynamics are only intensifying in 2024, with the current year poised to set new records for violence and displacement.

² https://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building

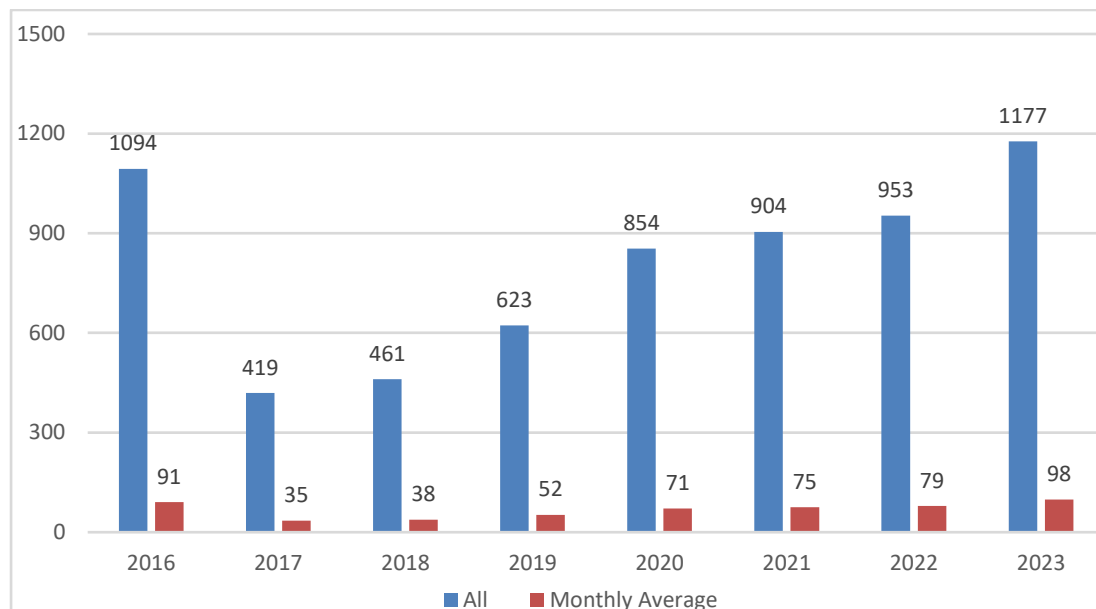
³ <https://icahd.org/2021/04/26/statistics-on-house-structure-demolitions-november-1947/>

⁴ <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/raided-and-razed/raided-and-razed.pdf>

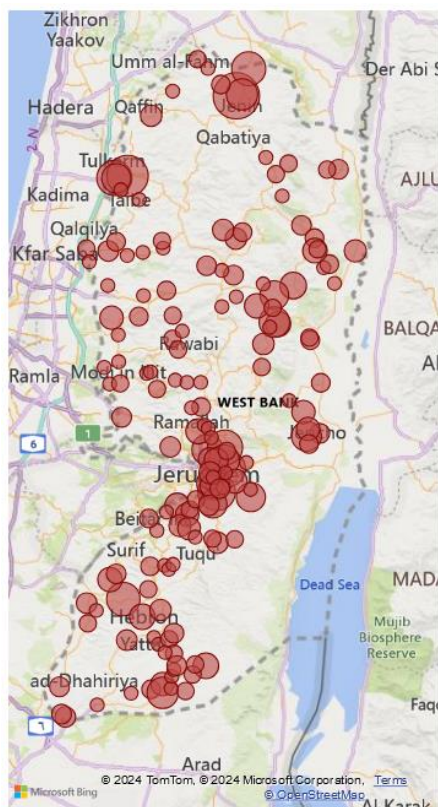
2. GENERAL DEMOLITION FIGURES

2.1. Material Damage: Annual Number of Structures demolished or seized

Table 1: Annual number of structures demolished or seized, and monthly averages



Source: UN OCHA

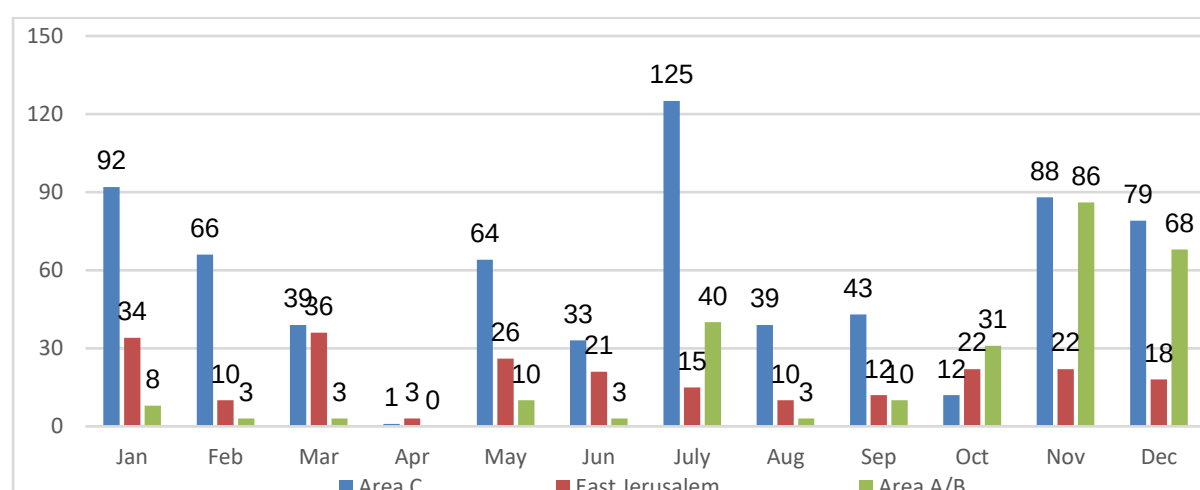


Source: UN OCHA

As shown in Table 1, demolitions in the West Bank have steadily increased over the past seven years. Between 1 January and 31 December 2023, a total of 1,117 structures were demolished or seized across the West Bank, with 229 located in East Jerusalem (19%), 683 in Area C (58%), and 265 in Areas A and B (23%). Demolitions occurred in all governorates, with East Jerusalem being the most affected, where 364 structures were demolished, displacing 737 people. Hebron (179 structures, 174 displaced), Jenin (168 structures, 709 displaced), Nablus (133 structures, 223 displaced), and Tulkarem (129 structures, 230 displaced) also saw significant impacts.

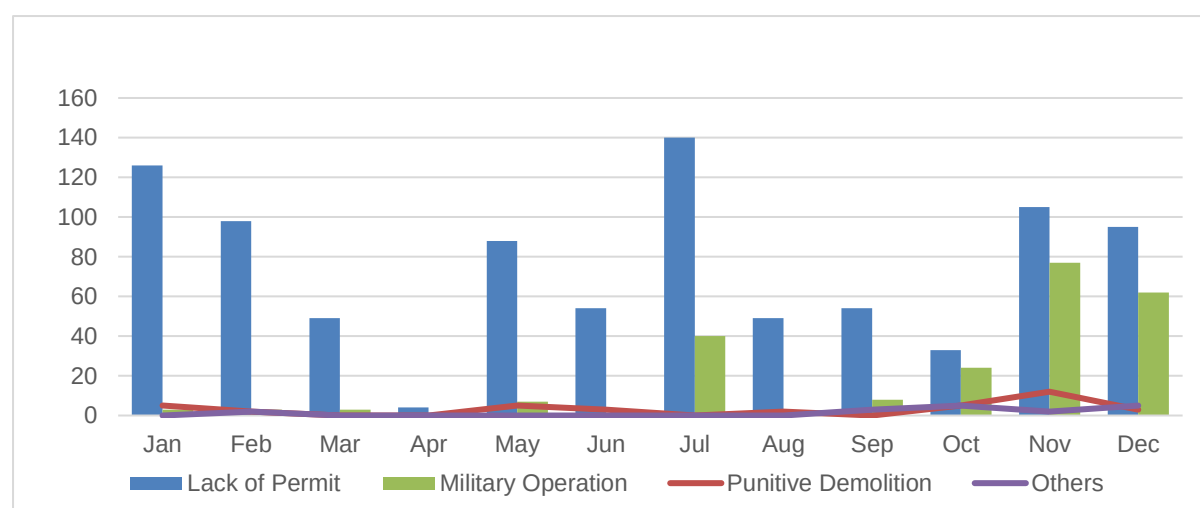
In terms of specific locations, the Jenin refugee camp recorded the highest number of demolitions (92 structures), followed by the Nur Shams camp (66), mainly due to Israeli military operations, particularly after 7 October. Jabal al Mukabbir (49 structures), the Az Za'ayyem Bedouin community (44), and Hizma (40), all bordering East Jerusalem, were also heavily impacted. The accompanying map highlights the geographic spread of demolitions and seizures throughout the reporting period.

Table 2: Monthly number of structures demolished or seized



Source: UN OCHA

Table 3: Monthly demolitions by context



Source: UN OCHA

In the first quarter of 2023, a total of 290 structures were demolished or seized, leading to the displacement of 413 people. This marks a 46% increase in demolitions and a 78% rise in displacements compared to the same period in 2022, which had already set a record for demolitions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 2016. The number of structures demolished in East Jerusalem during this period more than doubled compared to early 2022, reaching the highest level since April 2019⁵.

In 2023, a total of 895 structures were demolished across the West Bank due to the lack of building permits—permits that are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, both in East Jerusalem and Area C. Additionally, 37 structures were demolished under punitive orders, while 228 were destroyed during military operations.

⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-demolitions-and-displacement-january-march-2023>

2.2. Human Damage: Monthly and Annual Number of People Displaced and Affected by demolitions or Seizures

Table 4: Monthly number of people displaced⁶ and affected⁷ by demolitions or seizures

2023	All Displaced	All Affected
January	176	10.490
February	158	497
March	73	287
April	6	6 ⁸
May	160	1023
June	110	8829
July	375	35.025
August	40	288
September	64	14.163
October	194	35.703
November	446	180.932
December	494	153.232
Total for 2023	2.296	439.875

Source: UN OCHA

From 1 January to 31 December 2023, a total of 2,296 Palestinians were displaced due to demolitions and seizures, representing more than a doubling of the figure from 2022, when 1,031 individuals were displaced. Among those displaced, 1,152 Palestinians, including 575 children, lost their homes as a result of Israeli authorities demolishing or forcing families to demolish their properties, citing a lack of Israeli-issued building permits. Additionally, 173 Palestinians, including 70 children, were displaced following home demolitions carried out on punitive grounds. Lastly, 921 Palestinians, including 394 children, were displaced during military operations conducted by Israeli forces, which resulted in the destruction of 222 structures.⁹

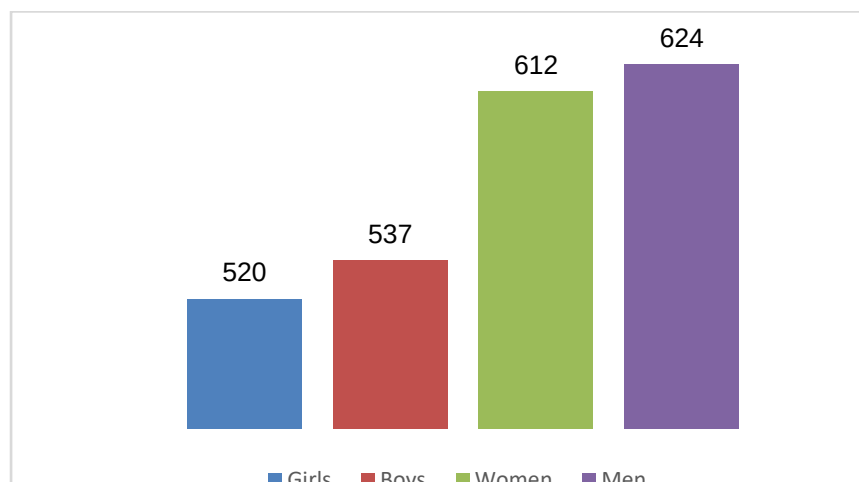
⁶ Includes all people who had a structure used as their habitual place of residence demolished.

⁷ Includes all people who had any of their property, other than their residence, demolished. Displaced and affected are here

⁸ The month of April experienced a relatively low number of demolitions attributed to the month of Ramadan, during which the Israeli authorities customarily halt most demolitions.

⁹ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/over-4000-palestinians-displaced-west-bank-2023>

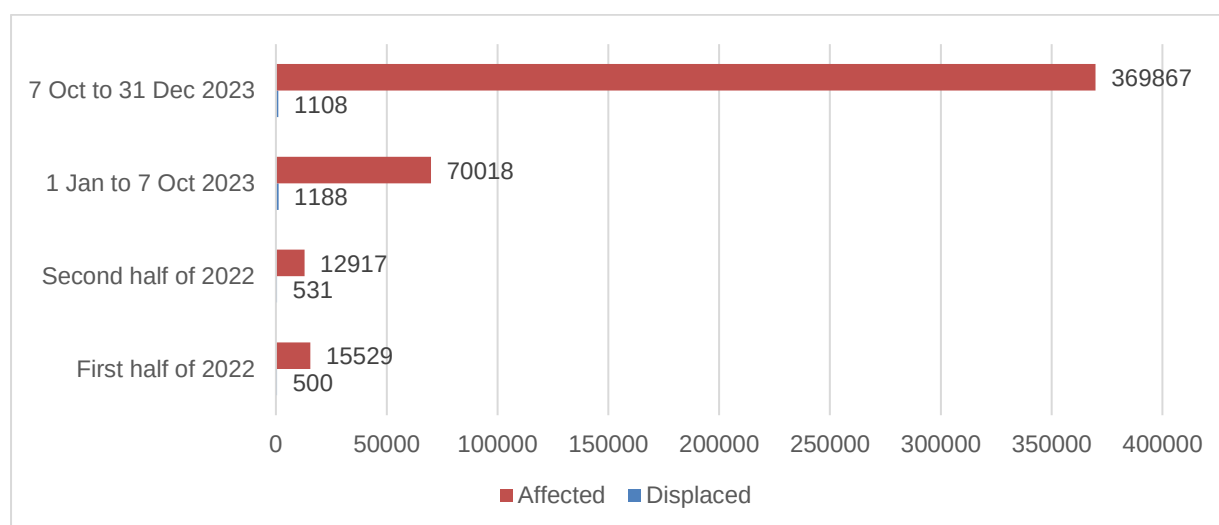
Table 5: Disaggregated Displacement Figures in 2023



Source: UN OCHA

During the reporting period, 520 girls, 612 women, 624 men and 537 boys were among the displaced. Almost half of the displaced were thus children (see table 5).

Table 6: Number of people displaced or affected before 7 October 2023 and after, in comparison to 2022



Source: UN OCHA

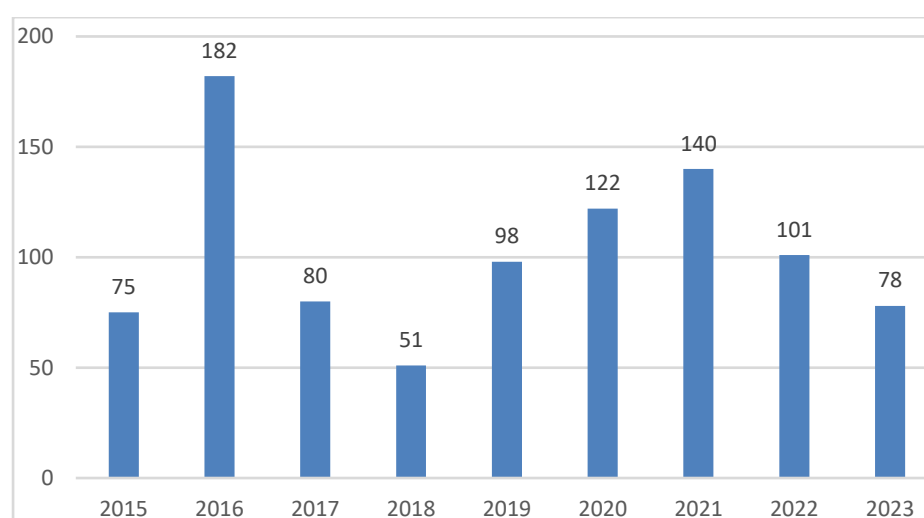
A staggering trend for 2023 is the dramatic rise in the number of Palestinians affected by demolitions and seizures. While the number of displaced individuals more than doubled compared to 2022, the total number of affected individuals surged by over 15 times, increasing from 28,446 to 439,875 people. These destructions by Israeli forces impacted approximately 7.25% of the 3.19 million

residents of the West Bank.¹⁰ This significant increase is largely attributed to a rise in demolitions linked to military operations in densely populated areas throughout the West Bank.

3. TARGETED STRUCTURES FUNDED BY THE EU OR EU MEMBER STATES

A total of 78 structures constituting humanitarian assets, including residential and livelihood structures, funded by the EU or its Member States were demolished/seized in 2023. The material loss of these targeted structures are EUR €248,086, which is lower compared to the four previous years. The significant drop mainly happened in Q4 coinciding with the outbreak of the October 7 war in Gaza. This is likely to explain the decline. It should be noted, that settler violence against EU-funded assets increased, resulting in EUR 130,000 in financial losses, with 75 % of damages occurring in Q4 2023. Between 2015 and 2023, a total of 927 EU-funded structures were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities, representing an accumulative value of €2,902,099.¹¹

Table 7: Annual number of targeted structures funded by EU or EUMS



Source: UN OCHA

Table 7: Financial Losses of structures targeted

2015	75	€ 206,000
2016	182	€ 557,378
2017	80	€ 272,602
2018	51	€ 168,282
2019	98	€ 480,625
2020	122	€ 300,233
2021	140	€ 331,031
2022	101	€337,019

¹⁰ Using the figures of the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_InterPopDay2022E.pdf

¹¹ Since the outbreak of the war, it has become increasingly challenging to verify the number of EU structures demolished. Figures may change as new information becomes available.

2023	78	€248,086
TOTAL	927	€2,902,099

Source: UN OCHA

4. DEVELOPMENTS OF CONCERN IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The following developments raise serious concerns as they adversely impact the lives of Palestinians and contribute to the entrenchment of Israel's presence and control over the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

4.1. East Jerusalem

Throughout 2023, a total of 140 housing units were demolished in East Jerusalem, reflecting a 60% increase compared to the previous year under the former government. This marks the highest number of home demolitions in a single year, with the exception of 2020, when 144 units were destroyed. In addition, 84 other structures, including shops and warehouses, were also demolished during the year.¹²

In the first quarter of 2023 alone, the number of structures demolished in East Jerusalem more than doubled compared to the same period in 2022, reaching the highest level since April 2019. The areas of Jabal Mukabbir and Hizma were the most severely impacted, accounting for 40% of all demolitions in East Jerusalem during this period.

The trend of self-demolitions that emerged in 2019 continues, with an increasing number of structures being demolished by their owners after receiving demolition orders. Many choose this route to avoid financial penalties, imprisonment, and to minimise damage to nearby properties and personal belongings. In the first quarter of 2023, 32% of demolitions in East Jerusalem (24 out of 79) were conducted by the owners themselves, a rise from 27% over the preceding five years. This represents a 37% increase compared to the same period in 2022. This practice is facilitated by Israeli legislation that restricts the authority of Israeli courts to intervene and allows the Jerusalem Municipality and other enforcement authorities to exert pressure on families to demolish their own homes. For instance, a family in Silwan was compelled to self-demolish their home in February 2023 after receiving a final demolition order, having already incurred approximately 100,000 NIS or approximately 24,888 EUR in fines since 2017 for building without a permit.¹³

In Silwan, two significant groups of families are confronted with the threat of eviction or large-scale home demolitions. In Batan al-Hawa, 87 families risk eviction due to claims that the land on which their homes are built was owned by a Jewish Trust (the Benvenisti Trust) until 1948. This is based on Section 5 of the Israeli Legal and Administrative Matters Law, which allows former Jewish owners to reclaim such lands. Settler organizations' are making use of this law to drive eviction cases against Palestinian families in the Israeli court system. In al-Bustan, about 100 families are at risk of having their homes demolished in an area where the Jerusalem Municipality plans to establish an archeological and touristic park. The park would be adjacent to the existing national park called the City of David, largely operated by the Elad settler organization. In Sheikh Jarrah (specifically Umm

¹² <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/2023%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-demolitions-and-displacement-january-march-2023>

Haroun and Kerem al-Jaouni), 43 families in Umm Haroun are facing eviction in cases spearheaded by settler groups, while a Supreme Court ruling in March has temporarily protected 34 families in Kerem al-Jaouni from eviction.

In the al-Walaja area of East Jerusalem, where approximately 1,000 residents live, some 150 homes are at risk of demolition despite efforts by the community to get the Jerusalem Municipality approval for a zoning plan for the area. Since 2016, demolition orders have been issued for nearly half of the homes in the neighborhood. Over 40 housing units have already been demolished, with two additional units destroyed in 2023.¹⁴

At least one third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli-issued building permit, potentially placing over 100,000 Palestinian residents at risk of displacement. About a thousand Palestinians in East Jerusalem face the threat of forced eviction following claims initiated mostly by settler organizations. According to OCHA, at least 218 Palestinian households have eviction cases filed against them so far, the majority initiated by settler organizations, placing at least 970 people, including 424 children, at risk of displacement.

4.2 Area C

The figures concerning demolitions in Area C highlight a troubling escalation in the ongoing trend of rising demolitions and seizures, particularly affecting vulnerable Bedouin and herding communities. In 2023, a total of 681 structures were demolished in Area C, with nearly one-third (220) impacting these communities, which often lack access to essential services like healthcare, education, water, and electricity. The Az Za'ayem Bedouins located on the outskirts of East Jerusalem faced the most severe impact, experiencing the demolition of 44 structures, including 35 on 25 July, displacing seven individuals.

Other communities experienced fewer demolitions but greater displacement: in Mantiqat Shi'b al Butum, south of Hebron, 27 structures—including 11 homes—were destroyed, displacing 78 individuals, while in Al Muntar also on the outskirts of East Jerusalem, 21 structures—including nine homes—were demolished, displacing 35 people. Overall, Bedouin and herding communities accounted for over half of all inhabited residential demolitions, with 61 homes affected compared to 50 in other parts of Area C.

Additionally, beyond the 572 individuals displaced by demolitions, at least 1,539 Palestinians, including 756 children, were forced from their homes due to Israeli settler violence, access restrictions, and diminishing grazing land. Since 7 October, 198 Palestinian households—totaling 1,208 individuals, including 586 children—have been displaced, predominantly from 15 Bedouin and herding communities. Notably, more than half of these displacements occurred on 12, 15, and 28 October, and 78% of all displacements linked to settler violence and access restrictions in 2023 took place after 7 October.

This surge in settler violence has been a primary driver of displacement, with incidents reaching record levels in 2023 according to OCHA data. Prior to 7 October, there was an average of three incidents per

¹⁴ <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/2023%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

day, escalating to seven per day in the following weeks. In contrast, 2022, the previous record year, averaged two incidents per day, totaling 849 incidents.

In 2023, the Israeli Civil Administration demolished two donor-funded schools. The Jubbet adh Dhib Elementary School in Bethlehem Governorate was destroyed on 7 May, followed by the demolition of Ein Samya Elementary School in Ramallah Governorate on 18 August. Furthermore, three schools were abandoned after their communities were forcibly displaced due to violent settler attacks, specifically Ras Al Tin and Wadi as Seeq in the Ramallah Governorate, and Khirbet Zanuta in the Hebron Governorate. In addition, two other schools sustained damage from settler attacks, with one school targeted in two separate incidents. Moreover, the latest Education Cluster update indicates that approximately 58 schools—50 located in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem—are currently at risk of demolition by the Israeli Civil Administration who state the lack of an Israeli issued building permit. These schools serve over 5,550 students and 700 teachers, underscoring the significant threat to educational infrastructure and the well-being of Palestinian children in the region.¹⁵

4.3 Areas A and B

In 2023, there was a notable increase in demolitions carried out on punitive grounds in Areas A and B, with Israeli authorities demolishing 24 homes and two additional structures as punitive measures. This marked a significant rise compared to 2022, when 11 Palestinian-owned homes and three structures were demolished under similar circumstances. The trend reflects a sharp escalation from previous years, with only three punitive demolitions recorded in 2021 and seven in 2020. Israel often justifies these punitive house demolitions as counter-terrorism measures. However, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), such actions constitute collective punishment, which is prohibited under international law, specifically Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. These demolitions frequently result in confrontations and clashes between Palestinian communities and Israeli forces.

Additionally, large-scale military operations were the primary driver of demolitions in Areas A and B in 2023, resulting in the destruction of 225 structures and displacing 956 individuals, affecting 388,001 people. The most severe damage occurred in Jenin, particularly within its refugee camp, and in Tulkarem, including Nur Shams and Tulkarem camps. Of the 956 displaced, 637 were from the Jenin camp, where 77 houses and 14 other structures were demolished. Notably, a single raid on 3 July led to the displacement of 282 people in the Jenin camp. In the Nur Shams refugee camp, 165 individuals were displaced following the destruction of 39 residential structures and 27 other buildings, with the area experiencing particularly heavy damage after 7 October.

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

During the reporting period, the issue of demolitions and seizures continued to be raised by the EU through various diplomatic channels both locally and at headquarters with relevant Israeli interlocutors and government representatives. In addition, the following actions took place.

¹⁵ Data of the West Bank Protection Consortium

HQ Statements:

- On 14 March 2023, HRVP Josep Borrell reiterated in a speech at the European Parliament that “Settlements are illegal under international law and their expansion must stop, as well as demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.”¹⁶
- On 7 May 2023, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a statement condemning the demolition of the EU-funded school in Jubbet Adh Dhib in the occupied Palestinian territory and recalling that demolitions are illegal under international law.¹⁷
- On 24 May 2023, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a statement on settlements expansion and housing demolitions. In the statement, the EU firmly condemned settler violence and “is appalled to learn that the Palestinian community of Ein Samiya in the occupied West Bank, which comprises 172 people, including 78 children, was forced to leave their homes permanently, as a result of repeated settler attacks and demolition orders.”¹⁸
- On 11 July, Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, on behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell, delivered a speech mentioning “an alarming increase of demolitions, evictions, and settlement expansion”. The commissioner started that the EU has urged Israel not to proceed with these measures, which are illegal under international law.¹⁹

Local Public Communication

- On 30 January, EU and like-minded Heads of Missions visited the Palestinian community of Khan Al Ahmar to express their concern at the threat of demolition facing the village. Khan Al Ahmar is home to 38 Palestinian families and is also the location of a donor-funded school which serves five communities in the local area. The press release stated that “the demolition of the village and the subsequent eviction of its residents could amount to forcible transfer in violation of Article 49 of Geneva Convention IV.”²⁰
- On 26 May, EU diplomatic missions issued a press statement calling on Israel to halt all confiscations and demolitions in the occupied West Bank, to return or compensate for donor funded humanitarian items and to give unimpeded humanitarian access.²¹
- On 24 August, EU diplomats visited the Palestinian community of Burqa and the site of the recently displaced community of Ras at-Tin amid accelerating rates of settler violence and following the demolition by Israeli authorities of donor-funded humanitarian structures, including a school in the nearby community of Ein Samiya. The diplomats strongly condemned the recent demolition of Ein Samiya school, which was funded by donors as humanitarian relief, emphasizing Israel's breach of international humanitarian law. They called on Israel, as the occupying power, to halt all confiscations and demolitions and to give unimpeded access to humanitarian organisations in the occupied West Bank.²²

¹⁶ <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-238459>

¹⁷ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/israelpalestine-statement-spokesperson-demolition-jubbet-adh-dhib-school_en

¹⁸ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/israelpalestine-statement-spokesperson-settlements-expansion-and-housing-demolitions_en

¹⁹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ep-plenary-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-eus-relations-palestinian_en

²⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/diplomatic-missions-visit-palestinian-community-threatened-demolition_en

²¹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/local-press-statement_en

²² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/diplomats-condemn-settler-violence-and-ein-samiya-school-demolition-during-visit-burqa-and-ras-tin_en