

Israel Demolishes 23 Palestinian Homes in Hebron Area to Make Way for IDF Military Training Zones

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Global Research, February 07, 2016
[Haaretz](#)

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Latest development in multiyear battle leaves 60 children, 18 adults without dwellings.

The Civil Administration in the West Bank on Tuesday demolished 23 homes and three outhouses in the southern Hebron hills villages of Jinba and Halawa. According to Israeli activists who reached Jinba by midday, shortly after the demolitions, 78 people had been living in the newly-built homes, including 60 children.

These are two of the 12 villages in the area that have been waging a legal battle for 17 years in an attempt to prevent their evacuation and demolition so they can be used as army training areas. The European Union has been closely following the villagers' campaign, and has repeatedly stated it would view their evacuation as a coerced uprooting of a protected population, a contravention of international law.



Palestinian children search for toys in the remains of their home after it was demolished by Israeli bulldozers, Musafir Jenbah, south of the West Bank town of Hebron on February 2, 2016.

On Monday morning, the State Prosecution and lawyers for the Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), as well as the villagers' attorney Shlomo Lecker, announced that a bridging process started in October 2013 had failed. To the shocked surprise of residents and lawyers, within hours of informing the High Court of Justice of this development, Civil Administration officials arrived in these two villages and marked 40 dwellings for demolition. Less than 24 hours later they returned, accompanied by the army, and started destroying these structures. They also temporarily blocked a road leading to Jinba and confiscated vehicles and five solar panels.

The bridging procedure, mediated by law professor Yitzhak Zamir, was suggested by the High Court of Justice. The two sides were sworn to secrecy during this process. However, the Society of St. Yves learned that during the procedure the army demanded that residents leave their homes for a few days each month so that military exercises could be held in the area. The residents objected, leading to the termination of the bridging process.

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