

# Losing Battle with IDF, Palestinians in Firing Zone Face Largest Expulsion Since '67

Masafer Yatta's eight villages set to be cleared out after a 20-year court fight, despite evidence showing homes predating training area and questions over army's motivations

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*In a cluster of dusty hamlets south of Hebron, a decades-long contest of wills between Palestinians and the Israeli government may be coming to an end.*

After a legal battle lasting over 20 years, the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled in early May that the army could evict over 1,300 Palestinians living inside a military training zone that covers miles of rolling hilltops.

"They're trying to remove us from here, once and for all," said school principal Haytham Abu Sabha, who says he has lived in this village his entire life.

If carried out, it would be the largest single eviction in the West Bank since Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Six Day War, according to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

Fakhit is just one of nearly two dozen Palestinian hamlets that dot Masafer Yatta, the Arabic name for the sprawling hills south of Hebron. About eight would be cleared under the ruling. Local Palestinians work as herders and farmers, raising goats and sheep, who graze on the scrubby hillsides.

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