



## Parliamentary Briefing - Westminster Hall debate on the Effect of Israeli demolitions on Palestinian communities

Stephen Kinnock MP has secured a 90 minute debate in Westminster Hall at 2.30pm on Wednesday 6 December to discuss the severe effects of Israeli demolitions on Palestinian communities.

The demolitions of homes in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories are the most graphic manifestation of a systematic policy of forced displacement of Palestinians by Israel.

Jeff Halper, Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions: *"The house demolition policy represents a policy of displacement, of one people dispossessing another, taking both their lands and their right to self-determination."*

### Denial of Palestinian rights

Since 1967, Israeli authorities have demolished over 48,000 Palestinian homes in the Occupied Territories either in military raids or due to Israel's refusal to grant building permits to Palestinians, who are in turn forced to build 'illegally' and subsequently face demolition. Whether the demolitions occur under the pretext of 'no permits', 'military purposes' or 'punitive measures', they are all part of a Israeli policy against Palestinians that clearly contravenes international law and Palestinian human rights.

Many people affected already live in poverty, and demolitions are a leading cause of their ongoing displacement in the West Bank. The impact of this on children is particularly destructive, as many children affected by demolitions show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.



## Latest Figures

From 2006 until 30 September 2017, Israel demolished at least 1,299 Palestinian residential units in the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem), causing 5,849 people – including at least 2,948 minors – to lose their homes.<sup>i</sup>

In Palestinian communities unrecognized by the State of Israel, many which are facing the threat of expulsion, Israel repeatedly demolishes residents' homes. From 2006 through 30 September 2017, the homes of at least 942 people living in these communities were demolished more than once by Israel.

## EU and UK Funding

Israel is not only destroying Palestinian homes. In addition, from January 2016 through September 2017, the Civil Administration demolished 462 non-residential structures including fences, cisterns, roads, storerooms, farming buildings, businesses and public buildings in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem).<sup>ii</sup> More than 300 structures in the occupied West Bank demolished by the Israeli authorities in 2016 were at least in part funded by the EU or international NGOs. Some of these structures were built with British taxpayers' money.

Recently, Belgium has demanded compensation from Israeli for the demolition of donated school facilities in the Occupied West Bank.<sup>iii</sup> In July of 2017, the Netherlands also lodged a complaint with the Israeli government after dozens of Dutch solar panels donated to the village of Jubbet Al Dhib were confiscated.

## UK Parliamentary Action

On October 24, several UK Parliamentarians have written to Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to inquire whether the British government would join Belgium, Denmark, France, Spain, Sweden, Luxembourg, Italy and Denmark in demanding compensation for UK funded Palestinian structures in Area C. The signed Parliamentarians urged Boris Johnson to use all available means to prevent the demolitions of these communities, stressing that efforts should be made to ensure that British taxpayers' money is properly accounted for.



## Britain's Responsibility

Given the centenary of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, it is important to remember the British government's role in the ongoing illegal occupation and institutionalized discrimination which continues to affect the Palestinian people. HM Government bears responsibility for the plight of Palestinians and has a duty to ensure proper restoration and reparation for its historical failure. This should also be reflected in the Government's foreign policy on Israel/Palestine.

In accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, HMG should take strong measures to:

- Demand compensation for the buildings funded by EU and UK funds that have been demolished by Israel;
- Apply strong pressure on Israel to immediately cease demolitions of Palestinian-owned homes, until Palestinians have access to a fair and nondiscriminatory planning system;
- Guarantee there are strong requirements on donors to ensure their money reaches the intended recipients;
- End the ongoing illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories;
- Call for the implementation of the Palestinian right of return.

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<sup>i</sup> B'Tselem (2017) *Statistics on demolition of houses built without permits in the West Bank (Not including East Jerusalem)* [http://www.btselem.org/planning\\_and\\_building/statistics](http://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building/statistics) [Accessed 4 December 2017]

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> The Independent (2017) *Belgium demands compensation from Israel for demolition of donated school equipment in occupied West Bank* <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-destroys-west-bank-palestinian-schools-new-term-belgium-netherlands-compensation-a7912186.html> [Accessed 4 December 2017]