



Two Families Lose their Homes in Al-Walaja, An Indication of Impending Risk of Mass Demolitions in the Village

August 26, 2021

Yesterday, Israeli authorities demolished a home with two housing units in the section of Al-Walaja under the auspices of the Jerusalem Municipality. **The demolition highlights the severe threat of wide-spread demolitions that the Al-Walaja community is facing.**

Two families, comprised of 6 and 8 people respectively, lived in the home - each of them in a small, 55 square-meter (600 sq ft) apartment. They received the demolition order under the pretext of construction with lack of a building permit several months ago and subsequently appealed to the court. **Some 10 days ago, the Jerusalem Magistrate Court rejected the appeal and the families intended to appeal the decision to the District Court. The demolition was carried out yesterday with no prior notice and the family thus had no opportunity to delay it.**

Since 2016, roughly half of the homes in the East Jerusalem section of Al-Walaja have received demolition orders and roughly 25 of these have been carried out. Indeed, most of the homes in the vicinity of the home demolished yesterday are under demolition orders and three of them were demolished just in the last two years.

An appeal submitted by the village to the Israeli Supreme Court has led to temporarily freezing 38 of the pending demolition orders in the village. Recently, the State Attorney's Office requested that the Supreme Court reject the appeal. If the court does reject it, 38 demolitions are likely to happen quickly. Some 12 additional homes are also at risk of imminent demolition.

Demolitions in Al-Walaja are due to two combined Israeli policy decisions:

On the one hand, Israeli authorities have **never made an outline plan** for the annexed part of Al-Walaja and residents therefore have no possibility of obtaining a building permit. All construction that has taken place in Al-Walaja since 1967 is thereby considered illegal

On the other hand, in 2016 the government decided to **increase home demolitions** - specifically targeting Palestinian communities. Since that year, the National Enforcement Unit (under the authority of the Ministry of Finance) began issuing and carrying out demolition orders in Al-Walaja. This unit is the most aggressive of the Israeli enforcement units. **The combined effect of no outline plan and aggressive enforcement has led to half of the homes of the Jerusalem section of Al-Walaja currently being under threat of demolition.**

In January of this year (2021), the al-Walaja's community most recent attempt to advance the outline plan they prepared for their village was rejected by the Jerusalem District Committee. Meanwhile, Israeli construction plans of thousands of housing units around Al-Walaja are advancing - including a [new settlement on the Western side of the village](#). Indeed, **demolitions in Al-Walaja are part of the creeping annexation Israel is advancing within the Greater Jerusalem area**, specifically with the aim of connecting settlements near Bethlehem to Jerusalem, which would effectively fragment the Palestinian space of the southern West Bank.

This alert was written by Aviv Tatarsky, Senior Field Researcher.

Please address all inquiries to:

Aviv Tatarsky

Senior Field Researcher

Ir Amim (City of Nations/City of Peoples)

Jerusalem

Tel – 972-52-612-5119

aviv@ir-amim.org.il

**Please note that Amy Cohen, Ir Amim's Director of International Relations and Advocacy, is currently on holiday.*



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