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## Four Homes Demolished in Walajeh Signal Threat for a Whole Part of the Village

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### Four Homes Demolished in Walajeh Signal Threat for a Whole Part of the Village

This morning teams from the District Committee, accompanied by large numbers of border police, demolished four homes in the village of Walajeh. The houses were located in Ein Juweza, the residential part of Walajeh annexed to Jerusalem. Roughly ½ of the 100 homes in Ein Juweza are under threat of demolition, with most of the demolition orders issued by the Israeli authorities over the past two years. Every few months new demolition orders are distributed there, such that the number of threatened homes is steadily increasing. Distribution of demolition orders and the demolitions themselves are conducted by the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee (under the authority of the Ministry of Finance).

Today's demolitions were rapidly scheduled following the unsuccessful conclusion of legal proceedings aimed at cancelling the demolition orders.

One of the homes demolished was under construction while the other three were home to four families.

Some 150 local residents gathered inside and around one of the homes. This non-violent resistance delayed the demolition by some two hours, until border police fired tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets at the residents, violently removing those inside the home. Two young Palestinians were subsequently taken to the hospital, one due to injury from a rubber-coated steel bullet and the other after a soldier hit him in the head with a rifle butt. One Israeli woman was lightly injured from stones thrown by Palestinians.

Over the past two years Israel has demolished 15 homes in the Jerusalem section of the village. Residents of Walajeh cannot receive building permits as the Jerusalem municipality has refused for over 50 years to prepare a master plan for the village. The master plan prepared by local residents at their own expense was also rejected by planning authorities. Since 2016 the pace of home demolitions in Walajeh has quickened, although the village itself is cut off from Jerusalem by the Separation Barrier.

Today's demolitions clarify that Israeli authorities are determined to implement a policy that will result in erasure of the Jerusalem section of Walajeh, where a majority of its 100 homes were built after 1967 and thus lack building permits. Some 800 people are thus likely to be forcibly displaced.

Today's events highlight the danger of ongoing Israeli policies: if opposition is not registered, Israel is likely to forcibly displace many hundreds of Palestinians. If Walajeh residents attempt to defend their homes, dangerous clashes could result.

While refusing to allow building in Walajeh, in the area around the village Israel is promoting construction of thousands of housing units for Israelis on lands – some of which were confiscated from Walajeh – in the settlements of Gilo and Har Gilo. To the north of the village, within the Green Line and on lands that belonged to Walajeh until 1948, a construction plan of over 4,000 housing units is being advanced. These construction plans,

together with the national park declared on al-Walajeh land in 2013, are meant to create an Israeli continuum between Jerusalem and the Gush Etzion settlements surrounding Bethlehem. This morning's demolitions in Walajeh are an inherent part of the policy to transform this area into an Israeli space.

Written by Aviv Tatarsky, Ir Amim researcher

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