

United Nations slams Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem



United Nations, July 23 (RHC)-- Israel's destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem Monday met with fierce condemnation from the international community including the United Nations.

"The large-scale operation began in the early hours of this morning while it was still dark, forcing families out of their homes, and causing great distress among residents," three U.N. experts said in a statement after the demolitions.

The Israeli occupation forces demolished 11 Palestinian homes next to the illegal Israeli separation barrier on the outskirts of eastern Jerusalem Monday. The barrier severs Jerusalem from West Bank. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the barrier violated international law.

U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar showed her support for the Palestinians. "Palestinians deserve self-determination and statehood just like their neighbors, not destruction of their property and indefinite military occupation of their land. This has to stop!" she said in a tweet Tuesday.

Palestinians have expressed fear that the razing of homes and buildings near the fence will set a precedent for other towns along the route of the barrier, which runs for hundreds of kilometers around and through the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "What happened today in Sur Bahir is of even greater significance, as many other homes and structures now risk the same fate," the U.N. statement said.

The demolition "sets an alarming precedent for all homes belonging to Palestinian residents that are located in the vicinity of the illegal separation barrier," Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, a U.K.-based organization wrote in a letter to Andrew Morrison, the U.K. minister of state for the foreign and commonwealth office. They also called upon the British government to intervene in the matter.

Sur Baher was previously captured and occupied by the Israeli army following the latter's victory during the Six-Day War of 1967. Israel's Supreme Court ruled in June that the structures violated a construction ban. The deadline for residents to remove the affected buildings, or parts of them, expired last week.

Some Sur Baher residents said they would be made homeless. Owners said they had obtained permission to build from the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

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