

UN agency calls punitive demolition of Palestinian homes collective punishment

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This file photo shows Israeli forces standing by as a military bulldozer rips through a Palestinian-owned structure in the occupied West Bank.

United Nations, August 7 (RHC)-- The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says the Israeli regime has razed as many as eight Palestinian homes so far this year, calling the practice “collective punishment” of Palestinians.

The latest of the demolition processes took place in the Qarawat Bani Hassan village in the north of the Israeli-occupied West Bank on July 25, OCHA said as quoted by the official Palestinian Wafa news agency over the weekend. It targeted the houses of Palestinians, whom the regime had accused of killing an Israeli settler, the UN body said in its biweekly Protection of Civilians Report.

The demolition resulted in damage to three additional neighboring homes and displaced families comprising 18 people, including 10 children, the report stated. It added that number of Palestinian homes that Israel has demolished since the beginning of 2022 shows an increase compared with three in all of 2021 and seven in 2020.

“Punitive demolitions are a form of collective punishment and as such are illegal under international law as they target the families of a perpetrator, or alleged perpetrator,” the UN agency said.

According to the OCHA report, Israel demolished, confiscated, or forced people to demolish 38 Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem and Area C of the occupied West Bank during the reporting period, citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits. As a result, 32 people, including 17 children, were displaced and the livelihoods of about 335 others were affected.

The UN added that a total of 205 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished based on Military Order 1797, which provides 96-hour notice and limits the possibility to legally challenge the demolition through Israeli courts.

The Israeli regime occupied the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, including East al-Quds, in a heavily-Western-backed war in 1967. Ever since, it has dotted the territory with hundreds of illegal settlements that have come to house hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital. The Israeli regime, however, lays claim to the entire city as its so-called “capital.”

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