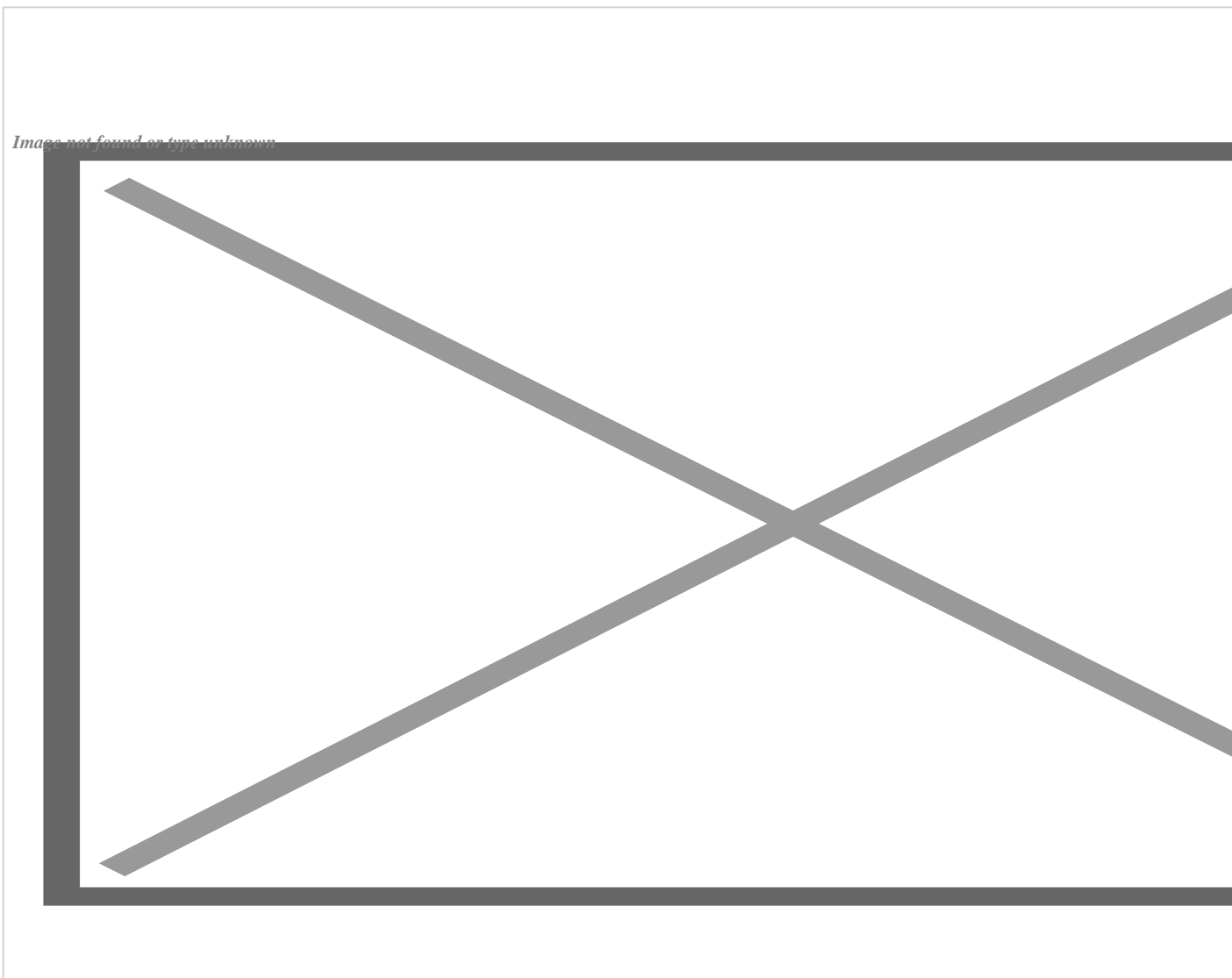


UN calls on Israel to immediately stop demolishing Palestinian homes



United Nations, February 26 (RHC)-- The United Nations has called on the Israeli regime to immediately halt its razing of Palestinian homes and structures in the occupied West Bank, saying such actions are contrary to international law and undermine humanitarian efforts across the occupied territories.

United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory Lynn Hastings said in a statement that the recent Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and evacuation of local residents and confiscation of their lands contravened international law, and were all in flagrant violation of human rights law.

The statement came a day after Hastings visited the community of Humsa al-Baqai'a, in the northern Jordan Valley, where the homes and belongings of families living there were either demolished or seized by Israel in an effort to drive them out of their lands.

"I visited the community of Humsa al-Baqai'a, which is situated some hundreds of meters into a firing zone in the northern West Bank... The homes and belongings of the families living there were demolished or confiscated five times by the Israeli authorities since the beginning of February," the UN official said.

"Tents, food, water tanks and fodder for their livestock have all been confiscated despite repeated calls by the international community for these actions to stop in accordance with international law," she added. "As we have noted previously, situations where communities are put under pressure to move raises a real risk of forcible transfer."

Hastings also demanded Israel to allow humanitarian agencies to provide shelter, food and water to the vulnerable Palestinian communities living in Area C, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the occupied West Bank, and forms a significant part of a future Palestine state under the so-called two-state solution.

Over 800 Palestinians are reportedly left homeless by Israeli demolitions so far this year, an advocacy group says. Israeli authorities usually demolish Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank, claiming that the structures have been built without permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain. They also sometimes order Palestinian owners to demolish their own homes or pay the demolition costs to the municipality if they do not.

The latest demolition has drawn widespread condemnation against the Israeli regime for exploiting the coronavirus crisis to press ahead with its campaign of razing Palestinian homes.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a plan for grabbing a huge swathe of the West Bank, namely the areas upon which the regime has built its illegal settlements since occupying the territory in 1967, as well as the strategic Jordan Valley. He made the announcement after former US President Donald Trump unveiled the so-called "Deal of the Century," a hugely pro-Tel Aviv scheme.

Following the signing of normalization agreements with Israel by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, there has been a rapid increase in Tel Aviv's demolition of Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem al-Quds.

The rise is coupled with an increase in deportation of Palestinians from Jerusalem al-Quds, their expulsion from al-Aqsa Mosque and daily storming of the compound by extremist settlers.

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