

Israel razes ancient cemetery in Palestine to build road for settlers

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Israeli forces destroying Palestine's oldest and largest known Canaanite Cemetery in the occupied West Bank. (Via social media)

Ramallah, July 18 (RHC)-- Israel has razed the oldest and largest known Canaanite Cemetery in Palestine, an archeological gem, whose construction dates back to around 4,200 years ago. In order to build a bypass road in the occupied West Bank, Israeli bulldozers, heavily guarded by soldiers, destroyed the site in the town of Khader, south of Bethlehem, according to the Palestinian Information Center, citing the Office of the Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission.

Hassan Brijieh, the director of the commission, said the cemetery was razed during the expansion works of bypass road No. 60, which connects Jerusalem al-Quds to al-Khalil (Hebron). He said the site was

estimated at four dunums in the area of Khilat Ein al-Asafir, south of Khader.

Brijieh added that the destruction of the cemetery is a blatant attack on Palestinian antiquities in light of international law and is considered a war crime against the Palestinians and their long history. Activists for the rights of Palestinians have reacted to the destruction of the cemetery and denounced the Israeli move. The Israeli regime is trying to control the arable land in Khader by building the apartheid wall after building the Kfar Etzion settlement there, the report said.

Israel commenced the expansion of bypass road No. 60 several months ago, which will also lead to the annexation of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land in Bethlehem and al-Khalil, the Ma'an news agency said in a report.

Separately on Friday, Farhan Haq, a spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, called on Israel to stop demolishing and confiscating Palestinian property. "Our humanitarian colleagues in the occupied Palestinian Territory tell us that on Wednesday, in the community of Ras al-Tin in Ramallah governorate, 84 Palestinians lost their homes when Israeli forces confiscated at least 49 structures," he said in a briefing.

Haq also noted that Israeli forces "dismantled and confiscated a residential structure [Thursday] in Humsa Al Baqi" in the northern Jordan Valley." Israeli authorities demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank usually claiming that the residential structures have been built without the relevant building permits, which are almost impossible to obtain.

"The UN has repeatedly called on Israel to halt its demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property and adhere to its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law," Haq added.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

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