

*Palestinian man forced to
demolish own home in occupied
Jerusalem*

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Jerusalem, August 18 (RHC)-- Israeli officials have forced a Palestinian man to demolish his house near the occupied Old City of al-Quds under the pretext of building without a construction permit.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa, citing the house owner Mohammed al-Qaq, said that he demolished his house in Musrara neighborhood on Monday after an Israeli court issued a demolition order. Had he not demolished the house himself, he said, the Israeli municipality would have charged him to have the building pulled down.

In early June, Israeli officials forced another Palestinian owner to self-demolish his own house in the occupied al-Quds neighborhood of Um Tuba, citing unpermitted construction as a pretext. Witnesses

told Wafa that Ibrahim Abu Teir, the owner, demolished his own house after being pressed into doing so by the Israeli municipality. Abu Teir had no choice but to do so in order to avoid paying exorbitant fees to the municipality in the event that its crews carried out the demolition on their own.

Israel routinely demolishes Palestinian houses in the occupied West Bank and East al-Quds, claiming that the structures have been built without permits, which are almost impossible to obtain. They also sometimes order Palestinian owners to demolish their own houses or pay the costs of the demolition.

Some 181 Palestinian structures in occupied al-Quds were demolished in the first half of this year, 40 of which were demolished by their owners following orders from the Tel Aviv regime's authorities.

According to the United Nations, Israeli authorities and military forces demolished 54 Palestinian-owned structures in East al-Quds in the largest division of the occupied West Bank during the month of July alone, again citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced in a statement that a total of 66 Palestinians, including 34 children, were displaced as a result of the demolitions that took place between July 5 and 24, and the livelihoods of more than 795 others were affected.

The UN body went on to say in its report that sixteen of the affected structures were provided by donors, of which fifteen were demolished in a single incident in al-Muntar area of al-Quds, while the sole remaining structure was destroyed in Beit Jala town.

The report highlighted that 80 percent of the affected structures (43) were in Area C of the West Bank, which constitutes about 61 percent of the territory and is under full Israeli military control.

Israel has already occupied thousands of dunums of Palestinian agricultural land to construct and expand new illegal settler units in various areas in the West Bank.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. The United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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