

Joint statement by CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU

Demolitions in the Masafer Yatta communities

We are alarmed by the urgent situation in the Masafer Yatta communities in the southern Hebron Hills at risk of mass demolitions and forcible transfer.

On May 4, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected the petitions submitted by Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta, and effectively gave a green light to forcibly transfer over a 1000 people from 8 villages in the area that the Israeli military has declared as a "firing zone 918". The move would be the biggest act of forcible transfer since 1970s, and a grave breach of international law, prosecutable as a war crime.

We are gravely concerned by the developments we have seen on the ground since the IHC ruling: Israeli authorities have already started demolitions in several communities in a move that signals the intent to push all the residents out of the area.

The West Bank Protection Consortium, through which the EU and its member states have been long supporting the Masafer Yatta communities with humanitarian assistance, has reported an increase in military pressure on the residents and has documented the destruction of at least 27 structures, including 16 donor-funded structures and 12 homes. As reported by the UN OCHA, the Israeli authorities did not allow alternative shelters to be installed in several communities after the demolitions.

Additionally, according to the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, the Israeli military entered several communities situated in the firing zone to photograph IDs, enter homes and demand information details of the residents on June 10 and 11.

Profoundly worrying are also live-fire military trainings by the Israeli army near the Masafer Yatta villages which will continue for a month and will severely impact the residents, hamper daily life, and damage their property.

The communities are now clearly under acute pressure of harassment and intimidation, while fearing imminent destruction of their homes. They are not only facing evictions but also losing the agricultural and herding land which makes up most of their livelihood.

The high court decision on firing zone 918 is part of a set of practices and policies in Area C of the West Bank, such as settlement expansion, settler violence, a discriminatory planning regime and ongoing movement restrictions, which inhibit and deny Palestinians their rights and cement Israeli control of the West Bank territory.

We take note of the statements to date including the [EU member states' statement at the UN Security Council](#). However, given the urgency of the situation and a track-record of a very limited impact of EU statements on developments on the ground, concrete action is needed.

In this light, we call on the EU and the member states to:

- Engage diplomatically with the Israeli government at the highest level to signal that forcible transfer of Masafer Yatta residents – a grave breach of international law – will have consequences for bilateral relations of the EU and the member states with Israel
- Call on the Israeli government to stop demolitions in the Masafer Yatta area, as well as military training exercises and other practices aimed at intimidating the residents
- Ensure that humanitarian access to the communities is allowed at all times
- Demand approval of master plans in Masafer Yatta
- Discuss amongst donor states and the EU concrete legal steps available to the EU and/or MS to address demolitions and to protect the communities