



Monthly Report

December 2011

# Israeli Violations in Occupied East Jerusalem

*Prepared by*

Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem

*in cooperation with*

Land Research Center

*Twelfth edition, fifth year*

## Introduction

During the month of December 2011 the Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, in cooperation with the Land Research Center (LRC), recorded **20** violations of Palestinian rights, both at the hands of the Israeli authorities and Israeli settlers.

- **Residency rights** - **Four** homes were demolished and **one** demolition order was issued.
- **Settlements and settler attacks** – **Five** incidents of settlement construction/plans for construction and settler attacks took place.
- **Demolitions and plowings** – **Four** incidents of demolitions and land plowings
- **Closure of Palestinian organizations** – Closure order for **four** organizations were renewed and extended for a year.
- **Attacks against individuals** – A Palestinian journalist was arrested and a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was beaten and arrested by police in front of the Old City.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

<b>VIOLATION</b>	<b>OCCURENCE</b>
Residency rights: home demolitions; demolition orders	5
Settlements and settler attacks	6
Demolitions and plowings	4
Closure of Palestinian organizations	4
Attacks against individuals	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

# 1. RESIDENCY RIGHTS

## Home demolitions

**Al Dado family:** On December 6, Israeli troops demolished the home of Khamis al Dado and his family in the Al Khalayla area of Al Jeeb. Khamis told an LRC fieldworker that he built his home over twenty years ago. "...Israeli troops, accompanied by two massive bulldozers approached my house and informed me that they were going to demolish it on the pretext that I had no permit. I asked them how they could demolish my home without first warning me. They claimed that an order was issued in 2008. I never received such an order. If I had received it I would have hired a lawyer to protect me!" He also recalls, "I tried to move as much as I could of the contents of the house but my efforts were in vain. They demolished everything. My family and I are now staying at my brother's place and I need to erect the tent I received from the ICRC." Khamis and his family estimate their losses around 50,000 NIS and that reconstruction costs will be approximately 200,000 NIS.

**Mabrooka family:** Samer Mabrooka and his family constructed the home in 2000 in Al Jeeb. It was demolished by Israeli authorities on December 6. Samer told an LRC fieldworker, "In 2010 I found a paper on my door, demanding that I cease construction on my house because I did not have a permit. I never received a demolition order. On the day that they demolished the Al Dado home, I went over to watch. I was standing beside one of the Israeli officers, when he took a glance at my house. He asked, 'Whose house is that?' I replied that it was mine. Not a moment later, he gave order to the same demolish squad to destroy my house. I managed to salvage a few of my belongings before they turned the house into rubble. Now we are living in a tent in the freezing cold." Samer is married with three children. He estimates his losses to be approximately 190,000 NIS.

**Al Yaseeni residence:** On December 12, Israeli troops surrounded the Beit Hanina home of Cesar al Yaseeni and initiated a demolition. The demolition was carried out on the pretext that Cesar did not have a construction permit for the home.

The soldiers evacuated family members and then threw the contents of the home on the sidewalk before a bulldozer levelled the house. Cesar told an LRC observer, "I started construction of the house a year ago – at the beginning of 2011. I moved in with my new bride. Last February we received an administrative demolition order, which we managed to freeze thanks to our attorney. This morning, Israeli troops showed up. Not only did they demolish our home, but also our dream of a safe sanctuary."

**Al Barqan family:** On December 5, Israeli troops and bulldozers surrounded the Al Barqan family home and began the demolition process. Haroun Barqan and his wife rushed their six children from their beds and the house.

Haroun told an LRC fieldworker, "They made us leave the house without giving us the chance to take anything out. We barely managed to rescue our children! By 7:20 am the house was rubble and my

wife, children and I were left homeless. This is not the first time they've targeted us. Less than a year ago, on January 16, the Israeli Municipality demolished our old home and fined us 50,000 NIS."

## **Demolition orders**

On December 22, officers of the Israeli Municipality issued demolition orders throughout Al 'Isawiya. Abdul Fattah Issa, one of the recipients of the orders, told an LRC fieldworker, "I applied for a construction licence in 2005 for a two-storey, 460 square meter building with a total of six flats. I received the license in 2007 and started construction in 2010. The building is still under construction...Recently I was informed by a neighbour that the Municipality had placed a paper on the entrance to the building. When I checked, I found that it was an administrative demolition order. Now I have two orders: one allowing me to continue construction, the other prohibiting it."

Abdul added: "The demolition orders are distributed in a random way, without preference. Officers come to a certain area and start distributing orders according to their own views of illegality. I will take this to court and I will try to stop this joke. Usually the Israeli Municipality hangs the orders. Sometimes they throw them into the yard of a house without concern for if it was received by the owner or if it was carried away by the wind or destroyed by rain. Their only concern is to limit and, if possible, prevent, the Arab population from expanding and developing."

## **2. SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLER ATTACKS**

### **Al Kurd family home, still at risk**

The Sheikh Jarrah Al Kurd family residence is still under immediate threat of seizure by Israeli settlers. Several houses in the neighborhood have already been captured by settlers who do not attempt to hide their intentions to capture the entire neighborhood and deporting all Arab inhabitants.

The home of Al Kurd family is inhabited by Um Nabil, her son, his wife and their children. All of its surrounding homes have been taken by settlers.

In a statement to an LRC fieldworker, Um Nabil said, "We were one of the first families inhabiting Sheikh Jarrah in 1956. The house was built over a two year period by UNRWA and the Jordanian Construction Agency. Before, it was an uninhabited area with nothing but trees. In the 1970s, Israeli colonists started visiting the area and gradually colonizing it. In July of 2011, the Court ruled that the house we live in is owned by colonial societies and that we do not have the right to live in it.

Our attorney, Mr. Sami Rasheed and I went to the court where he had a lengthy discussion with the District Attorney and the representative of the colonial societies and presented proof of my ownership. They were speaking in Hebrew and I could not understand, but I could see the hatred in the eyes of the representative of the colonial societies and felt that he was relishing the chance to attack us.

Now we are waiting the court decision whether we will have to evacuate our house or will have to begin paying rent to the colonists. Both situations grant them the rights to the house.

However, I will never leave my house.

Their plans are clear. They intend to take over the whole neighborhood and they are doing it through hard work, dedication and patience. The colonists living in the nearby house try to provoke us in extremely disgusting ways, using foul language and sometimes stripping in the courtyard when they see us. They are trying to drag us into fights with them.”

## **1,000 new settler units to be constructed**

On December 18 the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem announced its intention to construct 1,000 new settler units in Jerusalem. 500 units will be added to Abu Ghnaïm (Har Homa), 180 to Giv’at Ze’ev and 348 to Bitar Elit. The announcement appears to be in response to the acceptance of Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

According to a statement published by the government, the bids will be published with weeks and construction will begin in less than a year.

One week before this announcement, the Israeli Social Security Department approved the construction of a new residential neighborhood and farm in ‘Efrat settlement, which will also involved the expansion of the nearby settlement of Etzion.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, stated that such an act “endangers the two-state solution.”

## **Road 21**

During December the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem announced its intention to buy approximately 77 dunums of land in Beit Hanina and Shu’fat to construct a new road. This decision was based on articles 189 and 190 of the 1965 Construction and Organization law.

The road will not serve Palestinians living in Beit Hanina and Shu’fat, but rather nearby Israeli settlers.

## **Radical Israeli settlers deface mosques**

On December 14, radical settlers attacked Akasha mosque in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The settlers set the mosque alight and scrawled offensive slogans against Muslims and against Islam on its walls.

A Jewish activist, Baruch Marzel, showed his support for the act, saying that similar attacks should take place in response to what he called “Arab and Muslim hostility” against Jewish settlers.

The attack is part of a recent slew of similar “price tag” attacks taking place across Palestine.

## **Al Aqsa Mosque**

The Israeli Municipality in Jerusalem blocked the bridge leading to Dung Gate in the Old City, claiming that the bridge is on the verge of collapse. Such actions, however, are more likely part of Israeli urban planning to manipulate the demographics of the Old City. The government recently announced its willingness to construct a Jewish synagogue underneath Al Aqsa Mosque.

Additionally, on December 22, settlers broke into Al Aqsa Mosque. Such raids are uncommon, and normally take place under the protection of the Israeli Police.

## **Provocative demonstration in the Old City**

On December 26, hundreds of Israeli settlers marched through the Old City while celebrating Hannukah. They waved Israeli flags, sang and shouted offensive slogans against Arabs, calling on them to leave Jerusalem.

Israeli Police protected the demonstrators.

# **3. DEMOLITIONS AND PLOWINGS**

## **Farm in Ath Thuri**

On December 20, tens of Israeli soldiers entered the Al Shama'a area of Ath Thuri, uprooted trees and demolished a barn and shed. The farm held five sheep, tens of chicken and other birds, and tens of chicken. Its destruction generated over 230,000 NIS worth of losses.

The Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem justified the campaign by claiming that it is necessary for the "beautification of the city." It was ordered by the Israeli Environmental Protection Agency, which is responsible for the removal of centuries-old trees and a recent demolition campaign in As Suwwana.

## **Playground in Jerusalem razed by the Municipality**

Officers of the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Environmental Protection Agency levelled a 3.5 dunum playground, uprooting over 25 trees. The playground is part of Ibrahim College. It lay between the school and lands being targeted by the Municipality in a recent plan to construct a "biblical park."

The College Deputy, Abdul Salam abu Rmeilah, told an LRC fieldworker, "The Israeli Police and a bulldozer appeared in the area at 5:30 am. The bulldozer started removing the fence surrounding the playground without any prior warning. I went to the site immediately to find the Police Commissioner and Avitar Cohen, the director of the EPA. I asked them, 'What are you doing?' They replied by saying that the playground is illegal because it is located on Municipality property. They also claimed that they had an order that was issued on August 31. I replied by denying any knowledge of such an order and called Mr. Nihad Rashid, an attorney. I asked them to talk to the lawyer, but they refused."

He added that, “In 2004, the Municipality removed the fence surrounding the playground. We put it back up and assigned a guard. However they just did it again [that same year], this time under the cover of night. The guard saw almost 30 people and recognized Avitar Cohen. We called the Police who came and prevented them from removing the fence. We decided to file a complaint against the Israeli EPA since, as they were directly responsible for the attack as well as their continuous attempts to take over the land. Four months later, the Court ruled in our favor and we heard nothing from them until August of 2011 when the Municipality informed us that we are “illegally” using the lands.

Our lawyer, Mr. Nihad Rashid, presented property deeds and documents proving the legality of the land usage and we thought that would be enough. Nevertheless, instead of adding facilities and playgrounds to schools, the Israelis are ravaging and confiscating them.”

### **Shops in Beit Hanina and Shu’fat**

**Beauty Salon:** On December 12, Israeli troops demolished Suzie’s Beauty Salon on Al Maoun Road in Beit Hanina. The salon is the only source of income for manager Sufyan Hadya and his eight-member family.

Sufyan told the LRC “When I rented the space from its owner, Maysar Najib, in June of 2011 for 500 dollars a month, it was a garage. I rehabilitated the 30 square meter garage and converted it into a beauty salon. The process cost me around 60,000 NIS including furniture and equipment. Four months ago, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem placed an administrative demolition order on the salon door. I informed the owner who said that he had already hired a lawyer to handle the case. We didn’t hear from the Municipality again until the day I received a phone call from one of my neighbors telling me that the Israelis had demolished the Salon. I was there minutes later and saw a pile of rubble before my eyes. It took them just minutes to commit their crime.”

*“[T]he Municipality is going after Palestinians in their homes and through their sources of income. The Municipality destroys us. They steal from us through taxes and penalties and then they use our own money to buy bullets that kill us and bulldozers that destroy our homes.” (Witness to Sufyan Hady’s shop demolition, December 2011)*

**Paint shop:** On December 17, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem forced Ashraf Swelem to demolish his paint shop in Shu’fat. After Ashraf opened the shop 15 years ago he was fined 22,000 NIS for unlicensed construction.

On November 14 the Municipality inspector arrived with a demolition order saying that if he did not remove the shop within one month that the Municipality would do it at the family’s expense.

Ashraf and his family had no choice but to demolish the shop, their only source of income.

## **4. CLOSURE OF PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS**



On October 27, Israeli troops issued one-month closure orders for four Palestinian organizations, claiming that they received funding from ‘terrorist’ groups. In December, the authorities ordered the extension of the closures for a year.

1. **Shua’a Women’s Society in Shu’fat:** empowers Palestinian women economically, educationally and socially.
2. **The Jerusalem Institute of Development in Dahiat al Bareed:** provides social services for residents of Jerusalem.
3. **Sa’ed Institution in Kafr ‘Aqab:** provides education services for schools and students.
4. **Work Without Borders:** provides online job opportunities.

This is not the first time that such closures have occurred. 35 Palestinian organizations were closed and banned between 1867 and 2000 while 40 others were closed after 2000.

*“The existence of Palestinian organizations in Jerusalem is a reflection of the Palestinian people’s existence. The Palestinians are not trying to impose themselves. They are not trying to change facts on the ground...in fact, it is [the Israelis] who are trying to change the facts on the ground and create a new order...” (Faisal al Huseini, Chairman of the Arab Studies Society, 1994)*

## **6. VIOLATIONS AGAINST INDIVIDUALS**

### **Journalist arrested in Silwan**

Al Quds journalist, Isra’ Salhab was arrested in December by Israeli authorities in Silwan. Isra’ went to the Police Station after receiving a call demanding her presence. Upon arrival she was informed that she would be detained for 24 hours.

Isra’ commented, “I spent Wednesday and Thursday in solitary confinement. 48 hours later I was taken to a hearing where the judge extended by detention for five more days, then four more day, and then three more days. Israeli intelligence labelled my file ‘classified.’

On Monday they called my dad and my lawyer and agreed to allow me to be bailed out for 50,000 NIS and on my father’s vow to be present upon request.”

The police confiscated Isra’s Koran and her cell phone, returning them to her only after she repeatedly demanded them. She was also deprived of seeing her children.

### **Police beat 17-year-old**

On the evening of December 22 Israeli police officers assaulted Alaa Ramzi (17). Alaa said in a statement that, “Around 5:30 pm, I was heading to my grandmother’s house. When I got near Damascus Gate I saw people running, afraid. Then I saw Israeli soldiers running after them, moving in my direction. Six soldiers attacked me and started beating me all over my body. One of them kept

stamping on my head until I passed out. I woke up in Hadassa Hospital. Three soldiers were there, keeping me in their sight. I stayed in the hospital until 1:30 am when I was moved to a nearby Police station.

I was shocked to hear that a soldier had filed a complaint against me [for assault]. They kept me there until 3:30 am and then released me. I was banned from entering the Old City for three days.”