

Thousands of Palestinians in Area C face threat of expulsion from their homes

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In late 2011 the Civil Administration published a plan designed to "provide a permanent solution for the residence for the Bedouin population". The plan applies mainly to Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley and the Ma'ale Adumim area, and included the establishment of permanent communities in the Jordan Valley.



Residents of Khirbet al-Markaz in the area declared Firing Zone 918, where 12 communities face expulsion. Photo: Oren Ziv, activistills, 30.1.13

Bedouin Communities threatened with expulsion:

The Civil Administration plans to establish "permanent sites" for the relocation of Bedouin communities in the West Bank. According to the Civil Administration, the plan's objective is to improve the standard of living of these communities and to provide proper housing conditions. That said, the plan was drawn up without consulting the residents at all, irrespective of that fact that it dictates an extreme change in their lifestyle and methods of obtaining a livelihood.

- Area of Ma'ale Adumim: In the 1980s and 1990s, the Civil Administration expelled hundreds of Bedouins of the al-Jahalin tribe from the region in which they lived in order to establish and expand the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. The residents were relocated to a permanent site that had been established for them near the Abu Dis landfill. About 3,000 of the area's residents face the threat of expulsion in view of the Civil Administration's plans. Most of these individuals live in an area that will become an enclave connecting Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem once the Separation Barrier is completed. About 1,400 of the residents facing expulsion live in the area defined as E1, allocated to the municipal jurisdiction of Ma'ale Adumim. Israel plans to build the new settlement of Mevasseret Adumim in E1, a settlement that will create a contiguous urban bloc between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem.

- The Jordan Valley: Some 2,700 individuals live in about twenty shepherding communities in or on the outskirts of areas in the Jordan Valley that the military has declared firing zones. The Civil Administration is taking various measures to prevent these communities from remaining in the area, including repeated home demolitions, temporary relocations for the purpose of military training, and confiscation of water tanks.
- The South Hebron Hills: About a thousand individuals, half of whom are children, face the threat of expulsion from their homes and the destruction of their villages. The military had expelled residents from this area in late 1999, claiming that the area had been declared a "firing zone" back in the 1980s. Pursuant to petitions by the residents to the High Court of Justice, the villagers were allowed to return to their homes pending a ruling on the petitions. Yet the permission granted was temporary, and the threat of expulsion persisted. New petitions regarding the expulsion are currently pending before the court.



House demolitions in Khirbet Ras al-Ahmar, a community facing expulsion in the Jordan Valley. Photo: 'Atef Abu a-Rub, B'tselem, 30 July 2013

The Israeli authorities' conduct in this regard is motivated by an ambition publicly stated by various officials on a number of occasions. They aim to take over these areas so as to generate conditions that would facilitate their annexation to Israel as part of a final status arrangement, and until that time, annex them de-facto.

The expulsion plans made by the military and the Civil Administration run counter to the provisions of international humanitarian law, which prohibit the forcible transfer of protected persons, unless carried out for their own protection or for an imperative military need. Even when the transfer meets these criteria, it must be temporary. Moreover, as the occupying power, Israel has an obligation to work for the benefit and welfare of the residents of the occupied territory. The plan to expel these residents from their homes as well as impose living conditions on some that would undermine their source of livelihood is a breach of this duty.