



Susiya, West Bank Palestine 26.11.17
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OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN VILLAGE OF SUSIYA

'Save our village from Israeli Bulldozers'

'Israel wants to demolish our village. With the help of the international community, we won't let them'

Our village, Susiya, located in the south Hebron Hills of the occupied West Bank, is in immediate threat of demolition. The only way to stop the demolition is through international pressure.

On 22 November 2017 the Israeli State Attorney's Office announced that within 15 days they plan to demolish 20 buildings, which represent one-fifth of our village. This will violate the fundamental human rights of around 100 villagers, half of them children. The 20 buildings are our homes and also provide shelter for our animals. The timing of the demolition - in the middle of winter - could not be more devastating. It will leave us vulnerable and exposed to freezing rain and harsh winds. Our health clinic which provides health services for around 500 people from our own and surrounding communities, is among the buildings they plan to demolish. The Israeli authorities also want to demolish our village council which provides services for 350 local residents.

In 2012 we commissioned a master plan for our village, which was rejected several times by the Israeli authorities. The rejection prevents us from building houses together with the necessary infrastructure such as running water, electricity and paved roads to create a sustainable life in our village. It leaves us no choice but to remain on our land living in tents, under very difficult conditions, forbidden from building or repairing anything, in order to protect our land from the threat of annexation by the surrounding settlements.

In the Israeli government's recent response it was agreed to examine the legal principle of the planning issue. Yet despite the potential to develop a master plan for the village, the government states that it will demolish the 20 buildings immediately. And as we know from past experience, if they come to demolish once, nothing will prevent them coming back and trying to demolish the rest of our village.

The plan to demolish Susiya is a part of an extensive campaign of demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Last year saw the largest number of demolitions in over a decade. This reality has nothing to do with democracy or the rule of law. Instead, the Israeli government has repeatedly violated its obligations to us as protected persons living under occupation. In accordance with international law, Israel has an obligation to provide for the needs of the local protected population, an obligation it openly shirks. Furthermore, it will be a war crime if the Israeli government forcefully displace our village.

We therefore demand:

- No forced demolition of our village, Susiya
- The right to self determination over the natural development of our village
- Acceptance of our master plan and thereby the planning and building of concrete houses and the necessary infrastructure

The Village Council of Susiya appeals to the international community to stand with us in all possible ways in the face of enforced expulsion by the Israeli state.