

Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Flash Update #5

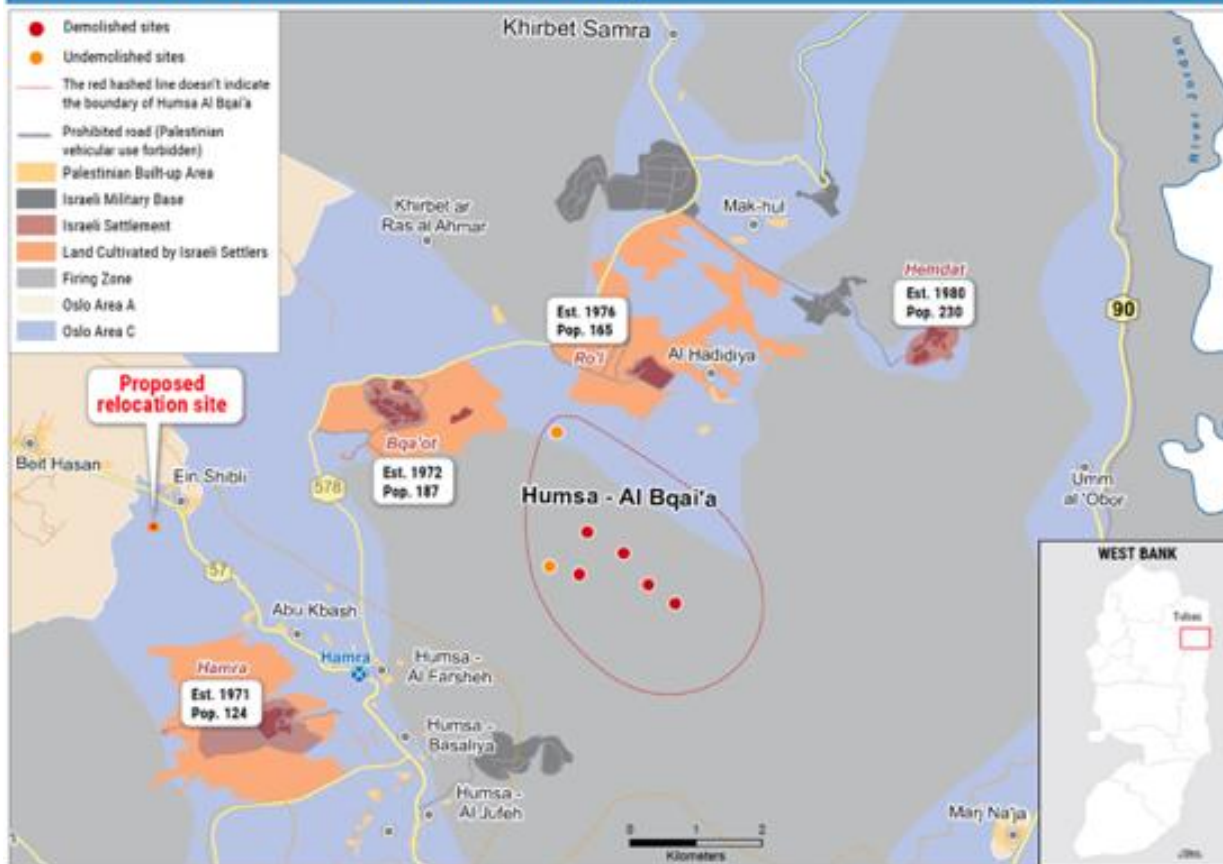
Humsa - Al Bqai'a

as of 25 February 2021

- On 22 February, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA), accompanied by the military, returned to the Palestinian herding community of Humsa-Al Bqai'a and confiscated another 18 residential and animal structures. In addition, to food parcels and unassembled structures, the ICA also confiscated all water tanks, leaving the community with no drinking water or water for their livestock. Most of the structures had been provided as a humanitarian response following incidents on 3 and 8 February, in which 37 structures were demolished or confiscated. Ten households, comprising over 60 people, including 36 children, were again displaced and are at heightened risk of forcible transfer.
- So far in 2021, the Israeli authorities have demolished, seized or forced people to demolish at least 227 Palestinian-owned structures, including 93 donor-funded, displacing 367 people, including some 200 children across the West Bank. This represents a near 185 per cent increase in structures targeted and a near 450 per cent increase in donor-funded structures targeted, compared with the equivalent period in 2020.
- Palestinians living in rural areas are dealing with the global COVID-19 pandemic. They are also facing current harsh winter conditions. Bedouin communities are among the most economically vulnerable in Palestine. The repeated destruction of their homes and property, including assistance provided by the humanitarian community is having a devastating economic, social and traumatic impact.



For additional information on the evolving situation in Humsa -Al Bqai'a, please see the previous four Flash Updates from earlier in February.




SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Palestinian Bedouin community of Humsa - Al Bqai'a, is located in Area C in the northern Jordan Valley, mostly in an area designated as a 'firing zone' for Israeli military training, where Palestinian residency or access is prohibited. Designated firing zones, which cover nearly 30 per cent of Area C, are home to 38 Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities with a population of 6,200. These are some of the most vulnerable communities in the West Bank, with limited access to education and health services, and water, sanitation and electricity infrastructure. On numerous occasions since 2012, the Humsa – Al Bqai'a has been temporarily displaced while the Israeli authorities carried out military trainings in the vicinity. OCHA has recorded over 50 such incidents during this period.

On 22 February, the Israeli Civil Administration confiscated 18 residential and animal structures, and other assistance, most of which was donor-funded. On 23 February, Lynn Hastings, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt visited Humsa - Al Bqai'a, following which she issued a [statement](#) calling on the the Israeli authorities to “immediately halt all further demolitions of Palestinian homes and possessions, allow the humanitarian community to provide shelter, food and water to this most vulnerable group and these people to remain in their homes.”

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE & ONGOING NEEDS

- **Protection**: Protection partners continue to provide psychosocial support to the community, including on-site Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support Services (MHPSS). The joint assessment by Protection partners on 15 and 16 February revealed child protection concerns and MHPSS needs for families and children, as a result of the trauma and high stress from repeated demolition and confiscation incidents. Protection partners also distributed clothes, shoes and toys for children and will continue to carry out on-site interventions, apprising the needs of the community by phone, and responding and conducting referrals as necessary.
 - **Shelter & NFI**: On 22 February, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) erected nine emergency tents and provided 15 tarps for the community, following the most recent confiscation. However, a more durable shelter solution is needed. Shelter partners will carry out cash assistance to each household by the end of February to cover the minimum livelihood needs for three months.
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- **WASH**: WASH-related needs have become critical, with the last water supply mechanism confiscated on 22 February. A temporary ad-hoc arrangement has been coordinated with the Tubas governorate. Mobile latrines provided previously have still not reached the community due to access issues.
 - **Health**: Upon request of the community, PRCS arranged for a mobile clinic to access the community on 24 February to provide health services and medication for chronic patients, and to conduct a health assessment. On 22 February, a doctor sent by the Tubas governorate, supported by health partners, was able to respond to urgent cases. More regular visits are planned.
 - **Education**: A joint assessment conducted by protection partners on 15 and 16 February revealed child protection concerns and MHPSS needs. Starting early March, Education Cluster partners will provide training on basic psycho-social support for all teachers of the school which the children from Humsa - Al Bqai'a attend.
 - **Food Security**: The need for livestock facilities remains critical. The main challenge remains the delivery of shelters for livestock. All the affected households have lost their animal shelters and storage units for fodder and related materials, through repeated confiscations, representing an immediate financial loss as well as a threat to their long-term livelihood. After the confiscation incident on 22 February, in which plastic tarps and food parcels were confiscated, PRCS provided

additional food parcels. Other partners will provide food assistance between 5 and 8 March on a nearby site as part of their regular quarterly distribution.

Demolitions, displacement and the risk of forcible transfer

International humanitarian law (IHL) requires an occupying power to protect the population of the territory that it occupies, ensure its welfare and wellbeing, as well as the respect for its human rights. Any destruction of civilian property by the occupying power is prohibited, except when rendered absolutely necessary by military operations, which is not relevant in the West Bank where there are currently no active hostilities. The extensive demolition of property is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and may amount to a war crime. Other than for the security of the population or imperative military reasons, IHL further prohibits the transfer of the population of an occupied territory without the genuinely and fully informed consent of the affected people, regardless of the motive. Consent is not considered genuine in an environment marked by the use, or threat, of physical force, coercion, fear of violence or duress. In the absence of such consent, the transfer is forcible and constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.