



UNITED NATIONS

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

KHIRBET TANA: LARGE-SCALE DEMOLITIONS FOR THE THIRD TIME IN JUST OVER A YEAR FEBRUARY 2011

On 9 February, Israeli forces demolished six residential structures and 21 animal pens in the community of Khirbet Tana in the Nablus governorate. These demolitions displaced six families (52 people) and affected a total of 106 people. This is the third time since January 2010 that the community has experienced wide-scale demolitions, and the fourth time since 2005.¹ Humanitarian organizations are currently working on assessing basic needs and providing an emergency response.



Remains of the Khirbet Tana school, demolished by Israeli forces in December 2010.

Background on Khirbet Tana

Khirbet Tana is a community of around 250 people, located in Area C,² south-east of Nablus city, in an area declared “closed” by the Israeli military for training purposes. The residents, who have lived in the area for decades, reside in basic shelters (tents, tin structures, old caves) and rely on herding and agriculture for their livelihood.

Because residents of Khirbet Tana need grazing land for their livestock, most have no choice but to stay in the area, in order to sustain their livelihood. As such, the community has repeatedly re-built modest structures on the land, including residential tents and animal shelters. In 2008, the community, with the help of the Israeli NGO Rabbis for Human Rights, lodged a petition with the Israeli High Court

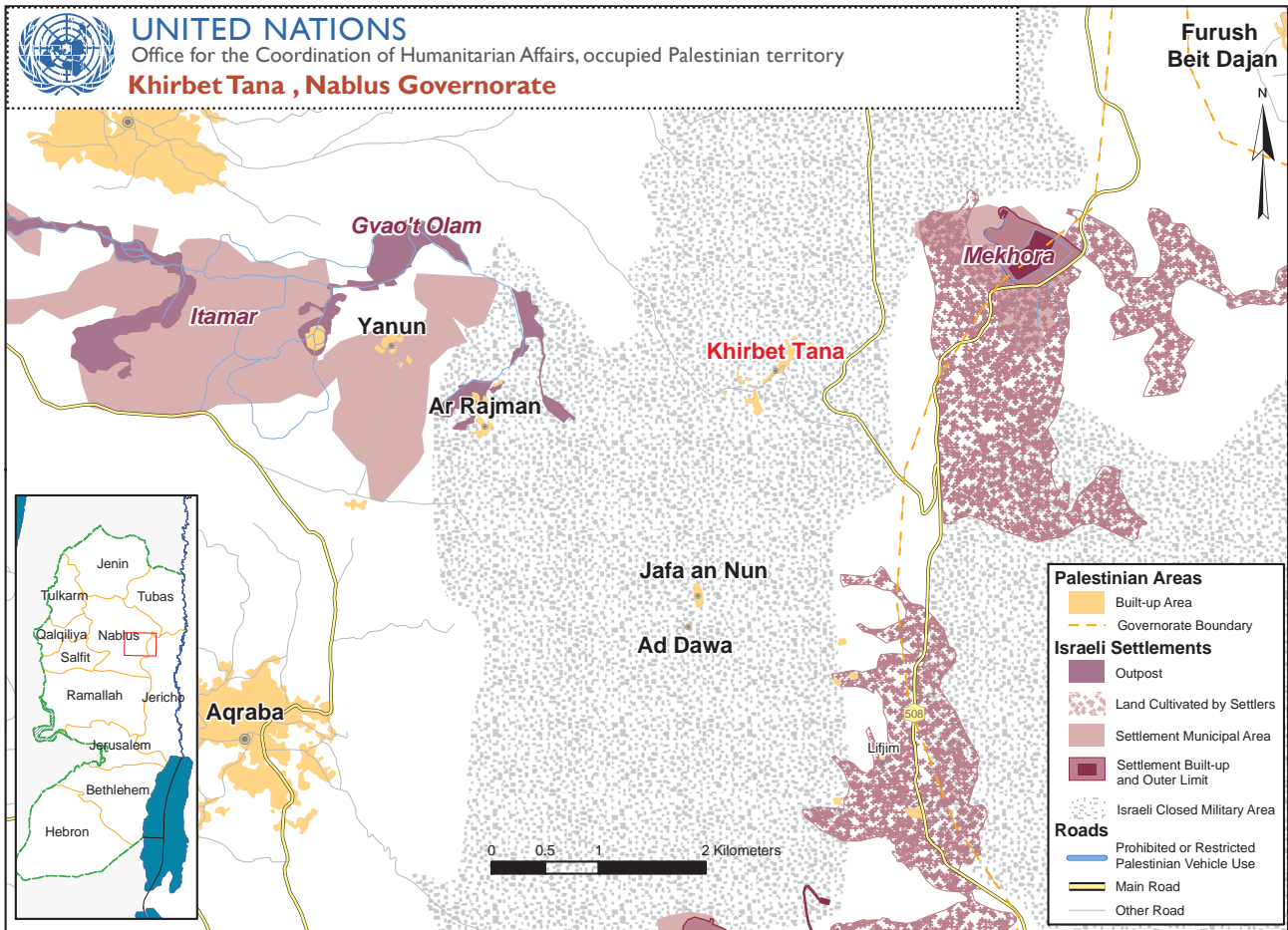
of Justice, requesting the preparation of an adequate planning scheme for the village that would allow the issuance of building permits. The Court rejected the appeal in January 2009, and, shortly thereafter, the community again began receiving demolition orders.

The repeated waves of demolition carried out by the Israeli authorities make it extremely difficult for Khirbet Tana residents to live in stability, sustain their livelihood, or, given the repeated demolition of the village school, educate their children. There are numerous other Palestinian communities living in a similarly precarious situation due to their location in an area declared “closed” by the Israeli authorities.

Background on Closed Military Zones / “firing zones”

Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have declared approximately 18 percent of the West Bank as a “closed military zone” for training, or “firing zones”.³ The Israeli Civil Administration prohibits construction in these areas and residents are routinely issued demolition orders and eviction orders, during the execution of which, wide-scale demolitions also frequently take place. In 2010,

some 65 percent of Area C demolitions occurred in “firing zones.” The constant threat of demolition and eviction creates pressures on Palestinian communities to leave these areas, raising concerns about forced population transfer. Many residents report that there is little or no military training in the areas in which they are residing.



Discriminatory Planning Policy in Area C

Israel heavily restricts Palestinian development in Area C. In practice, the ICA allows Palestinians' to build in less than one percent of Area C, in communities for which the ICA has prepared a detailed, or special, plan, and much of this area is already built-up. In some 70 percent of Area C, approximately 44 percent of the West Bank, construction is prohibited on the grounds that it is "state land," a "nature reserve," a closed military area, or part of the jurisdictional area of an Israeli settlement.⁴ In the remaining 29 percent, limited Palestinian construction is theoretically permitted, but must conform to the narrow building possibilities allowed by the Mandatory Regional plans. The Israeli authorities' restrictive

interpretation of these plans, however, makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain a permit.

While the ICA has heavily restricted Palestinian construction in Area C, it has established preferential practices for Israeli settlements and settlement outposts, approving detailed plans for almost all Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. Additionally, while settlement outposts – many of which are built on privately owned Palestinian land – have no approved plans, and, thus, no building permits, they rarely face the demolition of their structures.

2010 Trends: Significant Rise in Demolitions and Displacement

In 2010, OCHA recorded more demolitions in Area C than in any other year since it began its protection of civilians database in 2005; at least 353 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished, up 85 percent

from the number of structures recorded demolished in 2009.⁵ An additional 78 structures, including 24 residential structures, were demolished during the year in East Jerusalem.

The number of persons displaced by demolitions in Area C, some of whom were displaced multiple times, also rose significantly, by almost 50 percent. Additionally, the number of those affected, but not displaced, by demolitions, increased exponentially. This was due to the high number of people affected by the Israeli authorities' demolition of water wells and cisterns in Area C; such demolitions accounted for 94 percent of all those "affected" in 2010. However, if one excludes that type of demolition,

the number of persons affected by demolitions still increased dramatically, up by 48 percent, compared to 2009.

As of 8 February 2011, the Israeli authorities had demolished 20 Palestinian-owned structures, including 11 residential structures, in Area C of the West Bank this year. These demolitions resulted in the forced displacement of at least 55 people, including 33 children.

Impact of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement has serious immediate and longer-term physical, socio-economic and emotional impact on Palestinian families and communities. In addition to depriving the family of its main asset and source of physical and economic security, forced displacement frequently results in disruption in livelihoods, reduced standard of living and limited access to basic services, such as

water, education and health care. Families are often faced with mounting debt, increased poverty and dependency on humanitarian assistance, as well as increased vulnerability. The impact on children can be particularly devastating, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and reduced academic achievement.

Endnotes

1. On 8 December 2010, Israeli military forces demolished 29 structures in the village, including the school, displacing 61 Palestinians, including 13 children, and affecting over 100 others, including at least 22 children studying in the school. One week later, the Israeli authorities issued eviction orders targeting most of the remaining structures in the village and affecting some 100 people. Previous to this, the community experienced large-scale demolitions on two other occasions, in July 2005 and January 2010, during which the village's school was destroyed.
2. Over 60% of the West Bank is considered Area C, where Israel retains military authority and control over the building and planning sphere. Though the division of the West Bank into areas A, B and C was intended to be temporary, there has been no official change to this division since September 2000.
3. While Palestinian access to these areas is prohibited, enforcement of the access restrictions varies and the exact boundaries of the closed area are not clearly demarcated on the ground.
4. For additional details on planning in Area C, see OCHA oPt, "Restricting Space: The Planning Regime Applied by Israel in Area C of the West Bank," December 2009.
5. This figure includes both demolitions carried out by the Israeli authorities as well as self-demolitions carried out by Palestinians on order from the Israeli authorities.