



**Six-Month Report on Demolitions and Seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem
Reporting Period: 1 July – 31 December 2019¹**

Summary

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued during the reporting period. 319 Palestinian owned structures were demolished or seized, and 447 people (including 222 children) were displaced. Of the structures targeted in the six-month reporting period, 62 structures were funded by the EU or EU Member States with a value of nearly EUR 391,406.

The total number of demolitions in 2019 (January-December) amounted to 623 structures, of which 98 were EU funded humanitarian aid structures (valued at EUR 480,625), a doubling in the demolition of EU funded structures compared to 2018. Overall, 2019 saw a 35% increase in demolitions and a 95% increase in displacements, compared to 2018.

204 structures were demolished in East Jerusalem in 2019. This marks the highest yearly number in the last two decades. Demolitions of residential structures in East Jerusalem increased by 40% from 2018 to 2019. The number of people displaced in East Jerusalem doubled in the same period. 2019 also saw a significant number of demolitions in East Jerusalem carried out by the owners themselves to avoid fees to the Jerusalem municipality to cover the costs of carrying out the demolition.

Other concerning developments in the reporting period involve the unprecedented spike in demolitions of community infrastructure (not least related to water) which negatively affect large numbers of Palestinians, the implementation of Military Order 1797 (which expands the authority of the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) to quickly demolish certain structures, demolitions of educational institutions, as well as punitive demolitions.

¹ UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Demolition Database (last accessed 20 April 2019). All information disclosed in this report is susceptible to change at any time depending on new available data.

1. INTRODUCTION

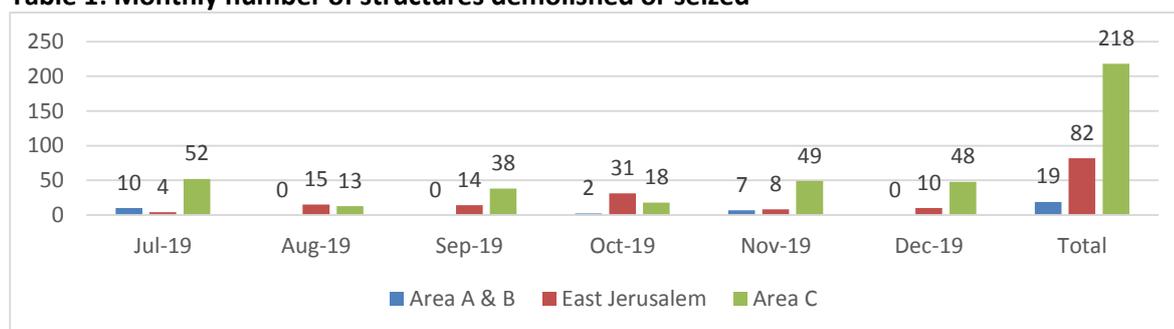
The restrictive planning and zoning regimes applied by Israeli authorities in parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, impede the development of adequate housing, infrastructure and livelihoods for Palestinians. Today, less than 1% of Area C, and about 13% of East Jerusalem, is zoned for Palestinian construction, which is a pre-condition for a permit to be issued by Israeli authorities, and most of these areas are already built up. Meanwhile, some 35% of East Jerusalem has been zoned for Israeli settlements and 70% of Area C is included within the boundaries of the regional councils of Israeli settlements and thereby off-limits for Palestinian development.² The Israeli organisation Peace Now has reported that since 1967, 99.76% of state land allocated by Israel for any use in the West Bank, was allocated to Israeli settlements. Meanwhile, Palestinians were allocated about 0.24% (about 1625 dunams), only 20% (326 dunams) of which were allocated "without strings for the benefit of Palestinians, and at least 121 of those dunams are currently in Area B under Palestinian control".

The Middle East Quartet has found that Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are almost never granted building permits from Israeli authorities.³ Palestinians who build without such permits face the risk of home demolition and other penalties, including costly fines. It is estimated that more than 10,000 demolition orders – issued due to lack of required permits – against Palestinian structures in Area C are currently pending. Many of these demolition orders could be implemented at any moment. At least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli-issued building permit, potentially placing over 100,000 residents (a large part of the Palestinian population) at risk of displacement. The practice of enforcement measures such as demolitions and seizures of humanitarian assets are contrary to Israel's obligations under international law, including provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

2. GENERAL DEMOLITION FIGURES

319⁴ structures were demolished or seized throughout the West Bank from July to December 2019. Of these structures, 82 were located in East Jerusalem and 218 in Area C. Table 1 displays the data by individual months.

Table 1: Monthly number of structures demolished or seized



Source: UN OCHA

The month of July saw the highest individual monthly number (66) of demolished homes and other structures. This increase was driven by demolitions in Area C (52 structures) but also in Areas A & B. 12 structures were demolished in Sur Bahir in East Jerusalem, 10 of them located in Area A, which according to the Oslo Accords falls under the control of the Palestinian Authority. In the second half of 2019, 82

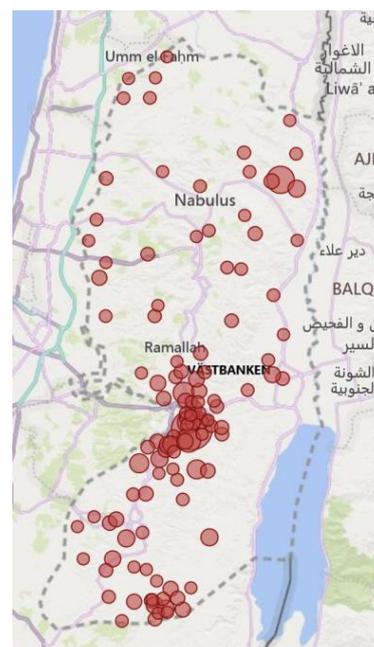
² UN OCHA.

³ Report of the Middle East Quartet of 1 July 2016. ICA data, analysed by the Israeli NGO Bimkom, shows that from 2000 to 2018 about 3-4% of building permit requests submitted by Palestinians in the West Bank receive approval. By comparison, Bimkom found that 97% of such requests were approved in 1972.

⁴ This number does not include partially demolished structures.

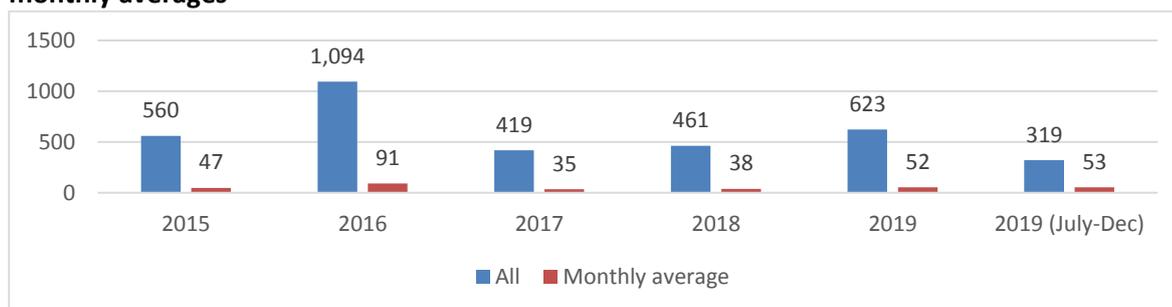
structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, accounting for 40% of all demolished structures. Area C accounted for 56% of all demolished structures.

In total, 623 structures were demolished or seized in 2019 (January-December). The map to the right shows the location of these demolitions and seizures.⁵ Demolitions and seizures took place in all Palestinian governorates, with concentrations in the areas in and around East Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem, but also in communities like Khirbet ar Ras al Ahmar in the North East, Khirbet Jubara in the North West, Az Zawiya and Deir Ballut in the West, and Khallet Atalla Maghayir al Abeed in the South.



On a monthly average nearly 52 structures were demolished or seized in 2019. This number is higher than in 2018 (38 structures per month), and in 2017 (35 structures per month), but well below that of 2016 (91 structures per month), see table 2.

Table 2: Annual number of structures demolished or seized, and monthly averages



Source: UN OCHA

The demolitions and seizures in the reporting period resulted in the displacement of 447 Palestinians (including 222 children), and adversely affected an additional 25,701 Palestinians (including 11,441 children), see table 3.

Table 3: Monthly number of people displaced⁶ and affected⁷ by demolitions or seizures

2019	All Displaced	Displaced Children	All Affected	Affected Children
July	47	26	7,965	3,391
August	19	6	1,094	717
September	54	26	1,119	252
October	87	45	216	118
November	141	71	431	221
December	99	48	14,876	6,742
Total (July-Dec)	447	222	25,701	11,441

Source: UN OCHA

⁵ Map retrieved via <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>.

⁶ Includes all people who had a structure used as their habitual place of residence demolished.

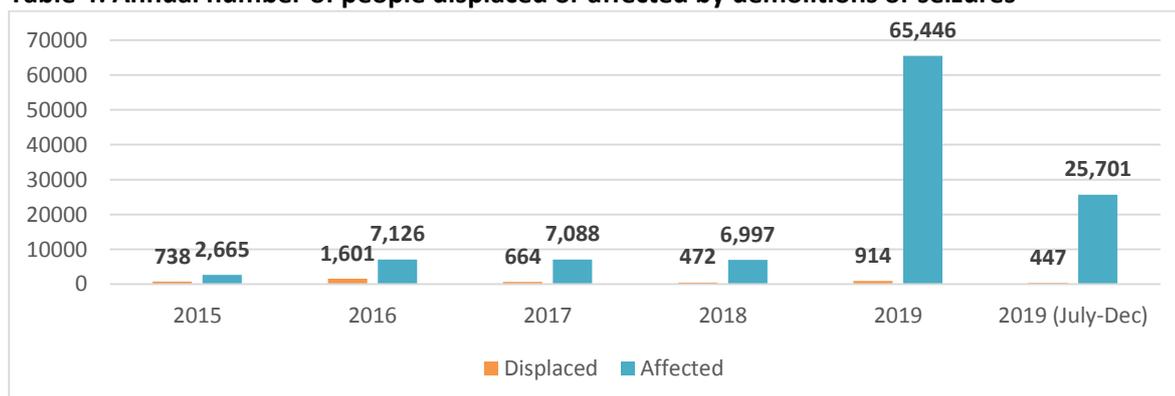
⁷ Includes all people who had any of their property, other than their residence, demolished. Displaced and affected are here mutually exclusive categories, i.e. people counted under the former are not included in the latter.

The respective numbers of affected Palestinians were especially high in July – when Israeli authorities destroyed eight water cisterns serving four communities in Hebron governorate (three of these communities were also affected by the levelling of land and uprooting of thousands of trees in two recreational areas); and in December – when Israeli authorities uprooted or cut over 2,000 forest trees and saplings in a recreational area developed with the support of EU Member States, serving some 14,000 residents in the nearby town of Beit Furik and the Khirbet Tana herding community. Also in December, another 11 structures – of which four funded by the EU and its Member States – were demolished in four Palestinian Bedouin communities in Area C of the Jerusalem Governorate in or around an area planned for Israeli settlement expansion (the “E1” plan). Furthermore, Israeli authorities demolished two water reservoirs (2,000 m³) in the Einun area next to Tubas town in Area C.

Other notable incidents in the reporting period took place in August when Israeli authorities demolished an EU-funded 1,000 m³ water tank in the community of Bardala in the northern Jordan Valley that served irrigation purposes; and in September when Israeli authorities demolished five water cisterns used for irrigation near the Khirbet ‘Atuf community (Tubas), in Area C, as well as cut down 240 olive trees and damaged another 220 trees.

In comparison with previous years, the number of affected people is exceptionally high in 2019, see table 4. This is principally due to an increase in the demolitions of infrastructure related to water distribution and transportation as well as the uprooting of the trees. The total number of people displaced in 2019 is also the second highest yearly number in the last five years.

Table 4: Annual number of people displaced or affected by demolitions or seizures



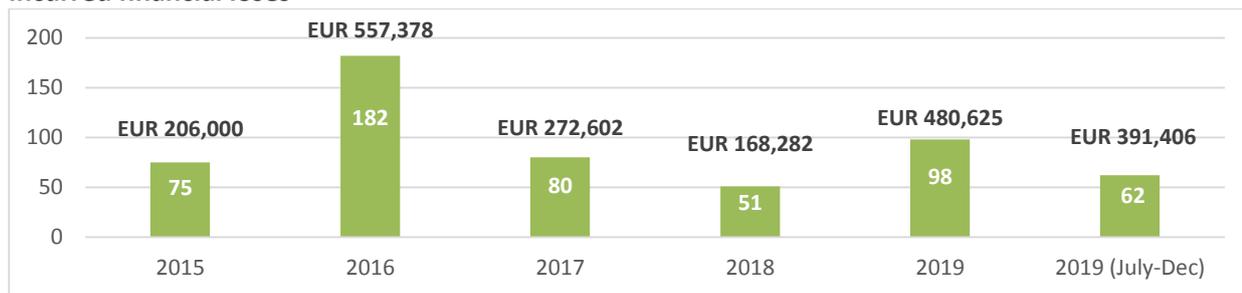
Source: UN OCHA

3. TARGETED STRUCTURES FUNDED BY THE EU OR EU MEMBER STATES

62 structures constituting humanitarian assets, including residential and livelihood structures, funded by EU or its Member States were demolished or seized in the second half of 2019. This number indicates similar levels as previous years, with the exception of 2016, see table 5. The 62 structures targeted represent an estimated material loss of EUR 391,406. For reference, from 2014 until the end of the current reporting period, approximately 536 structures funded by EU and/or EU Member States were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities, representing an accumulated value of EUR 1,837,501.⁸ Approximately 1,000 structures funded by EU and/or EU Member States (with a cumulative value of around EUR 5 million) are currently at risk of demolition.

⁸ For the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the financial losses incurred due to demolitions/seizures accounts for an average of 1% of its West Bank budget since it started recording such incidents in 2009.

Table 5: Annual number of targeted structures funded by EU or EUMS, including information about incurred financial losses



Source: UN OCHA

4. DEVELOPMENTS OF CONCERN IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The following developments are of concern as they negatively impact the lives of Palestinians, and contribute to the consolidation of Israel's presence and control of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

4.1. East Jerusalem

The planning and zoning regime of the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality prevents Palestinian urban development by means of placing restrictions and barriers on building activities and overlooking needs stemming from natural population growth, thereby creating a severe basic infrastructure and housing shortage for Palestinian residents as well as development constraints, such as a lack of schools, kindergartens, youth facilities, public places, educational frameworks, hospitals and health, social and development centres. A study of official Israeli data on building permits going back to 1991 shows that while Palestinians make up more than 60% of the population of East Jerusalem, they have received just 30% of requested building permits.⁹ Difficulties experienced in obtaining building permits, have created a situation where many Palestinians build without obtaining the necessary permits from the Municipality. As a result, it is today estimated that somewhere between one third to half of the housing units built in Palestinian neighbourhoods since 1967 lack permits, placing them at risk of demolition.

The total number of structures demolished in East Jerusalem during 2019 reached over 200 – a record high over the past two decades. Approximately half of the structures in East Jerusalem were residential structures i.e. 100 structures compared to 70 demolished residential structures in 2018, representing a 40% increase. The number of people displaced in East Jerusalem in 2019 doubled compared to 2018. Nearly 350 people were displaced in East Jerusalem in 2019, the largest yearly figure recorded by OCHA. 2019 also saw a significant number of demolitions in East Jerusalem carried out by the owners themselves to avoid the high fees charged by Israeli authorities for carrying out demolitions. 54 such "self-demolitions" were carried out, representing more than one quarter of all structures demolished in East Jerusalem in 2019.

In July, Israeli authorities demolished 12 structures in the Sur Bahir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, of which 9 were residential buildings, 3 of them inhabited. As a result 24 people, including 14 children, were displaced and at least 200 others, who have purchased apartments in these building, were affected. Although all the structures were located on the "Jerusalem side" of the Separation Barrier, 10 of them were located in a part of the neighbourhood designated as Area A, where the Palestinian Authority is responsible for planning issues. In August, Israeli authorities targeted 13 structures, 4 of which were EU-funded animal shelters, provided in response to a previous demolition in the community of Bir Onah (a residential area in the southern part of the Jerusalem municipal area). Another 3 structures were located in the Al 'Issawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. In September, Israeli authorities demolished 13 structures, including 2 adjacent under-construction residential buildings intended to comprise 84 apartments, located in two communities (Al Wallaje and Al 'Eizariya) separated from the rest of the city by the Separation Barrier.

⁹ Peace Now.

In October, 30 structures were targeted in East Jerusalem. The largest incident took place in the Jabal al Mukkabir neighbourhood, where Israeli authorities demolished 13 structures, including 1 home, 8 animal barracks, 2 storage containers and 2 stone walls, displacing 2 Palestinians and affecting another 60. Additionally, a building under construction was demolished in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sur Bahir, in a location designated as Area A. The demolition was carried out citing security reasons, connected to the location of the building in a “buffer zone” next to the Separation Barrier. In November, 8 structures were demolished, 3 of them being located in Silwan neighbourhood for lack of building permit. Silwan is one of the neighbourhoods most affected by Israeli settlement activity, with more than 450 Palestinians at risk of eviction due to legal action by settler organizations, out of nearly 900 Palestinians in such a situation in all of East Jerusalem.¹⁰ And in December, the Israeli authorities demolished 10 structures.

4.2. Water

Around 300,000 Palestinians in Area C are directly affected by Israeli restrictions and control of WASH-related infrastructure, such as water and sanitation networks, with around 95,000 people receiving less than 50 litres of water per capita per day, compared to the WHO recommendation of 100 litres per day, while over 83,000 people receive bad quality drinking water, or have to resort to purchasing expensive and unregulated water.¹¹

In the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished and seized infrastructure related to vital water distribution systems in Area C affecting Palestinian communities already suffering from water shortages. In July, Israeli authorities targeted eight water cisterns serving four communities in Hebron in Area C and issued a stop-work order for a water reservoir in Kardala (Tubas). In August, a large 1,000 m³ water irrigation reservoir was also demolished in Tubas. In September, 5 water cisterns were demolished in the same region affecting the Khirbet ‘Atuf community. In October, Israeli authorities issued a stop-work order for a water pipeline in Khirbet ar Rahwa (Hebron), which is now at risk of demolition. In November, 3 water cisterns were demolished in Beit Khalil (Hebron). In December, Israeli authorities demolished polyethylene water tanks in Wadi Sneysel in Jerusalem and a 1,000 m³ water reservoir in Einun area in Tubas.

4.3. Military order 1797

Military order 1797 came into effect in July 2019. It expands the authority of the ICA to remove, within 96 hours following the delivery of a demolition order, any structure that has not been completed or was completed within six months from the issuance of the demolition order. In the case of residential structures, the order gives authority to remove any structure that is still uninhabited or whose occupancy began within no more than 30 days.¹² The order supplements other recently issued military orders allowing Israeli authorities to seize “mobile structures” without notice.

Military order 1797 has been implemented in a number of recorded incidents in the reporting period. In July, it was used as the basis for demolishing two livelihood structures in Area C, and later in August as basis for demolishing an agricultural structure in Wadi Rahhal (Bethlehem). In October, two demolitions in Area C – in Beit Ummar (Hebron) and At Tayba (Ramallah) villages – were executed on the basis of Military Order 1797, 6 in November in Area C, and another 6 in December.

4.4. Education

Currently some 50 schools in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, are under threat of demolition due to pending demolition orders.¹³ At least half of these schools were provided with some form of support from the EU or EUMS.

¹⁰ According to UN OCHA, at least 870 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have pending eviction cases filed mainly by settler organizations.

¹¹ UN OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019.

¹² UN General Assembly document A/74/357 of 20 September 2019.

¹³ Joint statement on 30 January 2019 by the Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick, UNICEF Special Representative, Genevieve Boutin, and UNESCO.

In September, two EU-funded schools in Hebron received stop-work orders and are therefore at risk of demolition, affecting the Um Sidra community. In October, a stop-work order was issued for a partly EU-funded primary school in the As Simiya community in Hebron. These orders together with other interferences by Israeli authorities – demolitions, threat of demolitions, clashes with Israeli security forces on the way to school, teachers and students stopped in checkpoints, violence against teachers and students by security forces and settlers – negatively impact access to education for thousands of Palestinian children.

4.5. Punitive demolitions

Israeli authorities continued to demolish homes belonging to Palestinians, and their families, who Israeli authorities consider responsible of various attacks against Israelis. It should be noted that a number of such punitive demolitions have taken place before the conclusion of a judicial process in Israeli military courts, and therefore before the rendering of a guilty verdict. Israeli authorities typically cite “deterrence” needs for punitive demolitions, while punitive demolitions are illegal under international law.

8 Palestinian structures were demolished on this ground in the reporting period, including five homes and three water cisterns. In October, Israeli authorities demolished an under-construction home in Area A, in Al Amari camp (Ramallah), belonging to the family of a man who had been convicted of killing an Israeli soldier during a search and arrest operation in May 2018. The family's previous home was demolished for the same reason in December 2018. In November, 7 structures were demolished on punitive grounds, including 4 homes and 3 water cisterns, in Beit Kahil village (Hebron), displacing 15 people. The structures belonged to the families of 4 Palestinians accused of kidnapping and killing an off-duty Israeli soldier in August 2019.

4.6. Developments related to Israeli military exercises

The Israeli army continued to conduct military training exercises in areas designated by it as firing zones in the Jordan Valley of the West Bank. In the reporting period, 37 structures were demolished because they were declared to be located in the Israeli army training and firing zones 918 and 912.

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

During the reporting period the issue of demolitions and seizures continued to be raised by the EU with relevant interlocutors. In addition, the following actions took place.

- On 16 July 2019, the EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued a local statement, in which they noted with concern the stated intention of the Israeli authorities to proceed with the demolition of 10 Palestinian buildings, containing some 70 apartments, putting at risk of displacement 3 households comprising 17 people, including 9 children, in the Wadi al Hummus neighbourhood of which the majority of the buildings located in Area A and B under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, and 2 buildings in Area C. The EU Heads of Mission also expressed concern about the eviction on 10 July of the Siam family in the Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, where several other families from the vulnerable community of Wadi Yasul have received demolition orders.
- On 22 July 2019, the EU Spokesperson issued a statement on the demolition of 10 Palestinian buildings, containing some 70 apartments, in Wadi al Hummus, part of the Sur Baher neighbourhood, in occupied East Jerusalem. The EU Spokesperson stated that the majority of the buildings were located in Areas A and B of the West Bank where, according to the Oslo Accords, all civil issues are under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. The EU Spokesperson also expressed the expectation that the Israeli authorities would immediately halt the ongoing demolitions.

- On 6 August 2019, the EU Spokesperson issued a statement on settlement advancements by the Israeli authorities, and mentioned in this context that "the Palestinian population living in Area C continues to face repeated confiscations, demolitions, displacements and land expropriation, while almost all of their submitted master plans and building permits for Palestinian development remain unapproved".
- On 2 September 2019, the EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued a local statement about the demolition of a Palestinian family's home and restaurant near Bethlehem, located between the villages of Battir and Beit Jala in Area C of the West Bank. The EU Heads of Mission stated that these demolitions, together with settlement construction for Israelis in the area, exacerbate threats to the viability of the two-state solution and further undermine prospects for a lasting peace, and that the EU expects the Israeli authorities to fully meet their obligations as an occupying power under International Humanitarian Law.
- On 20 November 2019, the EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah issued a local statement on the occasion of the International Children's Day in which they expressed their concern about the violations of children's rights and remind all duty bearers that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is universally applicable, including to the occupied Palestinian territory. The EU Heads of Mission also expressed the most serious concern at attacks on schools and at the rate of detention amongst children and stress that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort, must not be unlawfully or arbitrarily detained, and must not be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in line with art. 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.