



Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Flash Update #6

Humsa - Al Bqai'a

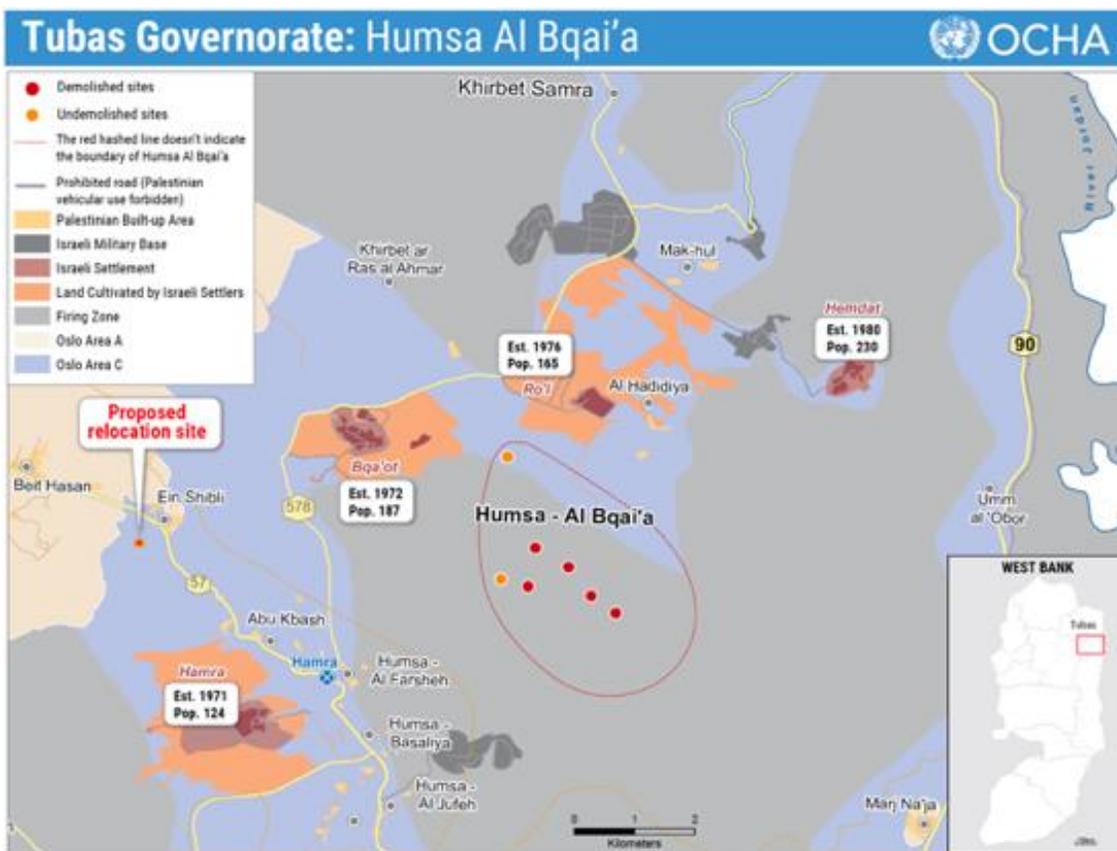
as of 7 July 2021

- Today, 7 July, for the first time since 22 February, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA), accompanied by the military, returned to the Palestinian herding community of Humsa - Al Bqai'a in the Jordan Valley. The ICA demolished 27 residential and animal structures and water tanks, and confiscated food parcels and unassembled structures, leaving the community with no food and water. They also confiscated all personal belongings, including food, milk for children, clothes, hygiene materials and toys. Also, their livestock is left without fodder and water. Eleven households, comprising around 70 people, including 36 children, were again displaced and are at heightened risk of forcible transfer. This information is preliminary.
- During the demolition today, representatives of OCHA, NGOs and member states tried to access the community, which was refused by the military on the grounds that a military operation was ongoing. Finally, in the evening, OCHA and NGO partners managed to visit and speak with the community. Some 11 of the structures demolished or confiscated today had been provided as a humanitarian response following similar mass demolition incidents on 3, 8 and 22 February, in which 55 structures were demolished or confiscated.
- Before the demolition today, the ICA again proposed to transfer the community to a different location, which they have ultimately refused. The military transported community's belongings at this location. The repeated destruction of their homes and property, including assistance provided by the humanitarian community is having a devastating economic, social and traumatic impact on the community, particularly children.
- So far in 2021, the Israeli authorities have demolished, seized or forced people to demolish at least 421 Palestinian-owned structures, including 130 donor-funded, displacing 592 people, including some 320 children across the West Bank. This represents a 24 per cent increase in structures targeted, a near 110 per cent increase in donor-funded structures targeted and over 50 per cent increase in people displacement, compared with the equivalent period in 2020.



Children from Humsa - Al Bqai'a left out in the open as night falls following the demolition of their homes and confiscation of their belongings by Israeli forces., 7 July 2021. Photo by OCHA

For additional information on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Humsa - Al Bqai'a, please see the previous five Flash Updates issued in February 2021.



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, 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.

During the mass demolition incidents in February 2021, the international community visited Humsa - Al Bqai'a several times and expressed support to this Bedouin Community. On 23 February, Lynn Hastings, the Humanitarian Coordinator, after one of these visits, issued a statement calling on 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

Humanitarian needs are currently under assessment by humanitarian actors, who are monitoring the situation.

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.