

Bedouin schools fighting for survival in Area "C"

Kaabneh's and Khan Al Ahmar's children



In Khan Al Ahmar, Bedouin children have to cross a busy highway on foot to reach a school which could be demolished any day.
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School demolitions, or threats of demolition, are among the most serious attacks on education in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Many Palestinian schools are under threat of demolition, and their students threatened with being deprived of their education.

The problem is especially acute in **Area "C"**, which is under full Israeli control and covers more than 60% of the West Bank. The vast majority of demolition orders are issued because a home or structure has been built without a permit from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA). However **a range of restrictions virtually eliminate the possibility of obtaining a building permit in Area "C" for Palestinians.** In order to accommodate their growing communities, they have no choice but to build without permits.

Palestinian Bedouin communities, which are among the most vulnerable and poor communities living in Area "C", are also among the most affected by the restrictive permit regime. Home demolitions, stop-work and demolition orders on schools and encampments, restrictions on Palestinian construction, lack of access to water and sanitation, settler harassment and the economic effects of movement restrictions on traditional community livelihoods have **left these herding communities struggling to make ends meet and living with the threat of demolition.** Bedouin **children are often hit hardest** and suffer from psychological distress and school drop-out.

Thirty Bedouin herding communities (over 3,000 individuals) **living on land slated for the expansion of settlements in Area "C" to the north and the east of Jerusalem face the imminent threat of forced displacement** despite the communities' decades-long presence, and the fact that many are already refugees since 1948.

The pressure exerted on communities to leave their homes jeopardizes both the future of Bedouin children and their culture.



A 3-year old girl sits on a pile of rubble in Area "C". ©UNICEF/Izhiman

At least 26 schools have pending demolition or stop-work orders in Area "C" and in East Jerusalem, meaning they might be demolished at any time. In the first seven months of 2011, 387 Palestinian structures have been demolished in Area "C" and East Jerusalem, leaving at least 755 people, including 409 children homeless. This is already higher than the whole of 2010, when the demolition of 439 structures left 606 people homeless. Some 1,500 other people were also affected by demolitions because they lost their means to make a living.

KAABNEH, the village without a road



Ikram, 8, studies in Khan al-Ahmar. © UNICEF/tzhiman

Located in the middle of a mineral landscape close to Jericho, Kaabneh's school is made of **a handful of shipping containers** which provide little protection from the desert heat. The students have **little access to sanitation** as there is only one functioning toilet. The school now covers up to ninth grade, but may not be able to open a tenth grade this year, preventing some children from enrolling. As the school does not offer sufficient space, some containers already have to accommodate two different classrooms simultaneously.

Kaabneh's population is estimated at over 300 people, the majority of whom are children. The latter have to **walk long distances** – up to 5 km - from their makeshift encampments in the mountain to the school. Between May and October, families move to other encampments located in coolest areas, and children are bused to the school when possible. Since **Kaabneh was never linked to the road**, children and their teachers must walk uphill in the heat to go to school. Several classrooms and shacks have received demolition orders from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA), putting children at risk of losing both their homes and an education. The Head of the school reports that even the few trees planted by children in front of the containers have been threatened with demolition by the Israeli authorities. Located in the northern part of the Jerusalem periphery, **near a settlement and its two associated outposts**, Kaabneh has **become the focus of demolition orders** and is facing increasing settler harassment and violence, while also having increasing difficulties accessing water resources.

KHAN AL-AHMAR, the rubber-tire school

Khan al Ahmar is located in the Jerusalem periphery and between two settlements. Over 100 Bedouin families from the **Jahalin tribe**, most of them refugees, live in shacks with corrugated iron roofs over their heads. The land the community lives on has been **slated for the expansion of settlements** in the Maale Adumim municipal area.

Many children have to **cross the busy Jerusalem-Jericho highway on foot** to go to school every day, and there are **no traffic lights to help them cross safely**. The ecologically-friendly school was built out of **recycled rubber tires and dried mud** with the assistance of Italian NGO Vento di Terra in June 2009. However it was slated for demolition immediately after it was built, and it is now **under threat of imminent demolition**.

Settlers living in Kfar Adumim are lobbying for the move. They entered the school several times and filed a petition against it, asking for an injunction not to re-open the school this September and pushing for the school to be swiftly knocked down. Though the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the request to close the school, it did request that the state inform the court within 45 days of any developments with the authorization of the demolition of the school. **The petition has set the clock ticking for the demolition of the school any day.**

The Bedouins of Khan al Ahmar have now exhausted all legal avenues to protect 12 homes and the school building from demolition. Such a demolition would effectively deny the children of the community their education and jeopardize their future. The community will not only be plunged into deeper poverty but may also be displaced and dispersed as a result.



11-year old Nimer in front of Khan Al-Ahmar School, built of recycled rubber tires and dried mud. ©UNRWA/Gosheh

UNRWA has launched a
 "Don't Demolish My Future" campaign
 to save the Khan Al Ahmar School:
www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=10
 85 OR www.facebook.com/unrwa

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