Evictions of South Hebron Hills Palestinians

Partners Denounces Israeli High Court Approval of Evictions of South Hebron Hills Palestinians

On the eve of Israel’s Independence Day holiday, Israel’s High Court of Justice approved the expulsion of about a thousand Palestinians from Masafer Yatta, a group of hamlets in the South Hebron Hills area of the West Bank. If implemented, the eviction would be the largest removal of Palestinians from their lands in decades.

The eviction order follows from the decision of the military to establish yet another West Bank “firing zone” in the area encompassing the homes and fields of the residents. The expulsion effort reaches back more than 40 years to a decision of the Israeli government to pursue the removal of Palestinians in the area in support of Jewish-Israeli settlement there.

The matter has been the subject of litigation for decades. It is against international law for an occupying authority to remove residents for purposes not in their benefit. The Court ruled in favor of Israeli government assertions that the Palestinians were not resident at the time the firing zone designation was issued, this in spite of extensive evidence to the contrary. One of the Supreme Court Justices ruling on the case is an Israeli settler from the area, which seems an obvious and inexcusable conflict of interest.

In recent years, the ongoing efforts to evict the Palestinian residents have included acts of vandalism and assault perpetrated by Israeli settlers from nearby unauthorized settlements with the tacit approval of the Israeli military.

1. **Partners for Progressive Israel denounces the Court decision as an abuse of law** in contradiction to the facts in the case, permitting an unjust expropriation of property and the initiation of a humanitarian crisis. This judicial failure further weakens Israeli democracy and the reputation of the Court both in Israel and outside it. Apart from the obvious and extreme injustice suffered by the victims themselves, such actions can only serve to erode Israel’s international standing while weakening the respect for human and civil rights in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

2. **Partners for Progressive Israel calls upon the Israeli government** to cease all efforts to remove the affected residents and to drop any similar cases that may be pending.

3. **Partners for Progressive Israel is troubled by the High Court’s determination in its ruling** that Israeli law takes precedence to international law in occupied territory. Such an approach moves Israel and
the Occupied Territories further toward officially becoming an undemocratic single state.

With crisis following crisis in recent days, we take this opportunity to also comment as follows:

- Partners for Progressive Israel is deeply concerned by media reports that Israel plans to approve approximately 4,000 West Bank settlement housing units next week, despite the explicit requests of the Biden Administration not to do so.
- Partners for Progressive Israel unequivocally condemns the atrocious murder this week in the Israeli city of Elad, and urges restraint on all parties, lest the situation escalate even further.