

“Stop the Evictions” Campaign

**Partners for Progressive Israel Wages “Stop the Evictions” Campaign
By Mark Gold**

The year 2021 has seen new escalations in Israeli administration efforts to advance a permanent occupation and unofficial annexation of the West Bank. These escalations are being carried out through a wave of eviction efforts, some through courts and others through permitted acts of violence.

In East Jerusalem neighborhoods, settler groups have been pressing eviction cases in Israeli courts. The annexation of East Jerusalem in the aftermath of the Six Day War made those neighborhoods subject to Israeli law. A 1970 Act permits Israeli landowners to reclaim who property lost in 1948 but Palestinians who lost property in Israel do not have a reciprocal right. In Sheikh Jarrah, Palestinian refugees from 1948 were settled on land acquired in the 19th century by a Jewish Trust. The Trust rights were acquired by US based company that supports Jewish settler eviction efforts and claims were filed in court. This year, the case reached the Israeli Supreme Court which did not rule on the claims but proposed its own settlement. The Supreme Court’s unusual action is a tacit admission of the improper asymmetry of the law and the social and international tensions that arise from this condition. But these cases are a small subset of a more general situation in East Jerusalem involving hundreds of properties and nearly a thousand residents. Recent disclosures regarding changes to land registration and title by Israeli authorities imply eviction efforts in East Jerusalem areas are likely to expand to far greater levels.

Palestinian displacement is not restricted to legal means. In the South Hebron Hills, a campaign of settler violence is being waged with tacit Israeli Army complicity which has not intervened in any way to protect Palestinian residents. People have been assaulted and property destroyed in an organized effort to expel Palestinians from the region. The right-wing segment of the current government, which maintains effective control, has downplayed the violence which essentially supports it. But the recent administration statements, designed to cover up the pogroms, reveal the pressures growing on it due to wider reporting and both national and international revulsion.



Israeli Jews and Palestinians marching to the police barricade in Sheikh Jarrah protesting the occupation and threat of home demolitions and evictions in the weekly Friday protest. Photo Credit: Gili Getz

These eviction efforts are not only an injustice to the Palestinian victims, they represent parts of a program to expand Israeli settlements in the West Bank and promote a permanent occupation there. They constitute a threat to the democratic Jewish future for Israel and its international legitimacy.

Unfortunately, Palestinian citizens of Israel have been caught in a web of evictions within the borders of the State. Building permits have often been withheld in Arab communities, thwarting needed housing development. The outcome of this practice is a cycle of unauthorized construction and ordered and executed home demolitions. This has been particularly true among unrecognized Bedouin communities in the Negev, some with roots from 1948 and before.

To combat these actions, Partners for Progressive Israel initiated a campaign this autumn to promote greater public awareness of the situation. The programming included presentations and discussions with Meretz MK and human rights attorney Gaby Lasky, a recorded interview with Jerusalem expert Daniel Seidemann, first person accounts of South Hebron Hills violence from Eid Suleman and PPI Board member Gili Getz, a photo essay prepared by Gili from his recent time in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, an article update from Kolot: Voices of Hope designee, Ir Amim about their efforts to expose and resist Jerusalem evictions, as well as disclosures regarding the US based pro-settler group,

Nahalat Shimon, behind some of the eviction In addition, the campaign covered the conditions in the Negev with a webinar interview with Aziz Al Toury, resident of Al-Araqib, just north of Beer Sheva, which has been bulldozed and rebuilt over 180 times.

Building public awareness about the legal and extra-legal efforts to expel Palestinians, promote discrimination, and advance an unofficial West Bank annexation is a critical step to stopping these processes.

To help Partners advance its Stop the Evictions campaign and to support the organization in its work, a generous donor gifted a matching grant up to \$15,000 for all contributions made during the month-long period of special programming. Partners reached out to supporters who responded wonderfully and allowed PPI to obtain the full benefit of the matching gift.

As Treasurer of the organization, I personally want to thank the matching grant donor and all who gave during this "Stop the Evictions" effort.



***Mark Gold** is a PHD economist and serves as Treasurer for Partners for Progressive Israel.*