ICC Mulls Probing Israel Over Razing Palestinian Homes in Jordan Valley

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The International Criminal Court prosecutors’ office is mulling opening an investigation into the destruction of the homes of dozens of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley village of Khirbet Humsah at the behest of the Combatants for Peace organization, which termed the act a war crime.

The incident [occurred last month](https://archive.vn/o/zx0hI/https%3A/www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-razes-homes-of-dozens-of-palestinian-families-in-jordan-valley-village-1.9979963) when the Israel Defense Force’s Civil Administration razed the homes and confiscated the belongings of about 60 Palestinians in the village, which is located in an area that Israel has declared a firing zone. It was the third operation of this kind in the past year.

The villagers told Haaretz that in February they were informed that if they would move 15 kilometers west, the property that had been confiscated from them would be returned. Ultimately they turned down the offer by the Civil Administration for an alternative site.

“While military forces are acting to expel the shepherd community in Khirbet Humsah, they were able to find creative solutions for [settlers living in and near Firing Zone 903](https://archive.vn/o/zx0hI/https%3A/www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-soldiers-expel-palestinians-while-letting-settlers-stay-documents-reveal-1.9522857), which shows that the need for ‘training’ is just an excuse to make demographic changes,” Combatants for Peace said in its ICC appeal, which was prepared by attorney Itay Mack; Rana Salman, the Organization’s Palestinian CEO; and Tuly Flint, its Israeli general coordinator.

“Beyond the fact that army training can’t be regarded as an urgent military need, in the case of Khirbet Humsah that reasoning doesn't apply, since the army does not want the residents to return to their place of residence in or near the firing zone at the end of the training,” the organization wrote.

“Instead, the army has issued demolition orders and has destroyed the [residents’ temporary structures](https://archive.vn/o/zx0hI/https%3A/www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-demolishes-tents-shacks-housing-74-palestinians-in-west-bank-firing-zone-1.9288707), confiscated their meager belongings and has put them under immense pressure to voluntarily move somewhere else.”

According to the left-wing rights' organization B’Tselem, about 2,700 people live in approximately 20 shepherding communities in areas declared by the army as firing zones or adjacent to them in the Jordan Valley.

The residents of Khirbet Humsah, who mainly work as shepherds, come from the village of As Samu in the southern West Bank. They came to the Northern Jordan Valley in the 1970s, as areas available for shepherding began to diminish or water sources were closed due to army restrictions and settlement construction. After the 1948 war many As Samu families lost their lands, which ended up being under Israeli control behind the Green Line.