

Palestinian prime minister and Arab League slam Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes as ethnic cleansing

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What's left of house of Palestinian Mahmoud Salhiyeh and his family, in the occupied East al-Quds neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, on January 19, 2022. (Photo by AFP)

Ramallah, January 20 (RHC)-- Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and the Arab League have condemned the Israeli practice of demolition of Palestinian-owned homes and structures as "ethnic cleansing."

On Wednesday, an Israeli mechanical digger, under the tight protection of Israeli soldiers, tore down the property of Palestinian Mahmoud Salhiyeh in the occupied East al-Quds neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, displacing his entire family of over a dozen, mainly children.

Local sources said a large number of police forces stormed the house and arrested 20 activists and six individuals from the 18-member Salhiyeh family, including Mahmoud. They assaulted the other members of the family, including his nine-year-old daughter and her aunt.

The family said that the Israeli forces had cut off electricity from the house as they raided it, and started firing tear gas to block everyone's vision. "This crime is part of (Israeli) policies of persecution, racism and ethnic cleansing against indigenous landowners in favor of settlers," said Shtayyeh in a statement later in the day, calling on the United Nations to intervene to put a stop to such policies, Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported.

The Palestinian foreign ministry also, in a separate statement, denounced the demolition, lambasting it as "ethnic cleansing" with the aim of forcing the Palestinian residents of the city to leave it in order to create a Jewish majority.

Israeli occupation forces have displaced a Palestinian family in occupied East al-Quds neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah before tearing down their home. Separately on Wednesday and in reaction to the demolition, Said Abu Ali, the Arab League's Palestine affairs representative, for his part, condemned what had happened in Sheikh Jarrah as "a war crime and ethnic cleansing."

He stressed that such a policy aims at forcing the Palestinians to leave their homeland by making it difficult for them to live there. The developments come as the Israeli regime continues to press ahead with its illegal settlement expansion and land grab policies across the Palestinian territories despite international outcry.

Sheikh Jarrah has been the scene of frequent crackdowns by Israeli police on Palestinians protesting the displacement of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes.

Since Israel seized East al-Quds in the 1967 war, Israeli settler organizations have claimed ownership of land in Sheikh Jarrah and have filed multiple lawsuits to force Palestinians from the area. Most of the international community considers Israeli settlement construction illegal under international law and an obstacle to the so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Nearly 700,000 Israelis live in illegal settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. The UN Security Council has in several resolutions condemned the Tel Aviv regime's settlement projects in the occupied Palestinian lands.

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