

Demolitions

There have been many accusations that Israel unfairly demolishes Palestinian structures. It is undeniably tragic when innocent families lose their homes, but the fact is that Israel does not demolish buildings arbitrarily. Like all governments, Israel has zoning, municipal, and other laws regulating construction. Like other countries around the world, Israel must sometimes enforce these laws by demolishing illegally built structures.

Israel is a country ruled by law. Neither Jews nor Palestinians face unjust demolitions without recourse to legal appeals.

- Demolitions occur only after Israel gives fair warning and judicial oversight is completed. Owners and residents are notified of demolition orders and told to contact the courts within 30 days. They are then given an opportunity to appeal the demolition in court, a process which can take many years.¹ Palestinians have filed successful appeals on numerous occasions.²

Jews are subject to the same regulations as Arabs.

- Israel has demolished illegally built Jewish homes and structures on numerous occasions.³
- Israel demolished far more Jewish than Palestinian structures in Jerusalem between 1993 and 2001.⁴
- Arabs and Jews enjoy similar rates of approval for building permits in Jerusalem.⁵

Most demolitions of Palestinian structures occur because of illegal building.

- Illegal building is a serious problem in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. There are 27,000-30,000 illegally built homes and structures in East Jerusalem alone, most of which have been left untouched.⁶
- The Palestinian Authority and Palestinian criminal organizations fund illegal building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.⁷ They are the ones ultimately responsible when Israel demolishes their illegal buildings.

Most structures that get demolished are not homes.

- Even anti-Israel groups admit that only 35% of structures demolished between 2009 and 2012 were residences.⁸ Anti-Israel propagandists have been exposed for staging photographs of children supposedly crawling through the ruins of their former homes, when in fact the demolished structures were empty.⁹

Some buildings are destroyed because Palestinian terrorists use civilian structures for military purposes.

- Hamas and its allies use homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals to hide arms-smuggling tunnels, store weapons, and fire rockets at Israeli civilians.¹⁰
- In 2002 terrorists in the Palestinian city of Jenin boasted that they had booby trapped over 50 buildings and used houses as bomb-making factories.¹¹
- Under international law, when a civilian structure is used for military purposes it becomes a legitimate military target.¹²

Some homes were demolished because Israel built more modern homes for Palestinians.

- Between 1967 and 1989 Israel sponsored the building of 2,686 new houses in the Gaza Strip.¹³

Israel does not demolish homes to get “living space” for Israelis.

- Authorized Israeli communities in the West Bank were built on vacant, state land, or in a few cases, on land purchased from local Palestinians.¹⁴

Israel does not demolish homes to punish Palestinians.

- In the past Israel followed the British practice of demolishing the homes of terrorists who murdered innocent civilians, with the goal of deterring future attacks. Israel officially ceased this policy in 2005.¹⁵

Israel helps Palestinians build homes and obtain building permits.

- In 2013 Israel announced a plan to build over 1,000 homes for Palestinians in the West Bank, invest in infrastructure there, and retroactively legalize some illegal Palestinian buildings.¹⁶
- Israel has taken the increasing population of Palestinians in East Jerusalem into account and set aside enough land to accommodate their housing needs through the year 2030.¹⁷
- The city of Jerusalem facilitates the permit process for Arab residents by providing free professional assistance.¹⁸
- In 2012 Israeli settlers from Gush Etzion helped their Palestinian neighbors in the West Bank get permits to expand and build 300 new homes.¹⁹

Palestinian terrorists have destroyed thousands of Israeli homes, schools, and other properties.

- Palestinian and Arab wars against Israel since 1948 have caused enormous damage. Terrorists have fired nearly 13,000 rockets at homes, schools, farms, and malls in southern Israel since 2001.²⁰
- 1,500 Israeli homes and buildings were destroyed or damaged by Palestinian rockets during Operation Cast Lead.²¹ In 2012 Palestinian rockets caused “extensive damage to homes, businesses, and vehicles.”²²

Israel’s neighbors demolish buildings regularly for urban planning and security reasons, but this is rarely reported in the mainstream media.

- Hamas, the terrorist group that rules Gaza, has demolished hundreds of Palestinian homes in recent years to make way for other structures.²³
- Egypt recently demolished homes along its border with Gaza in order to destroy the arms smuggling tunnels hidden beneath them.²⁴

- ¹ Ricki Hollander and Gilad Ini, "BBC Panorama Distorts the Facts About Jerusalem," *CAMERA*, January 21, 2010, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_print=1&x_context=55&x_article=1789
- ² Adiv Sterman, "Court calls for mediation in firing zone eviction dispute," *Times of Israel*, September 2, 2013, at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/court-calls-for-mediation-in-firing-zone-eviction-dispute/>
- ³ The Israeli Project, "Jerusalem Kit: Building," n.d., at <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2012/01/12/3091157/israel-demolishes-third-illegal-outpost-this-week>; Haaretz, "Israeli security forces demolish illegal buildings in West Bank outpost," December 15, 2011, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israeli-security-forces-demolish-illegal-buildings-in-west-bank-outpost-1.401545>; USA Today, "Israel demolishes West Bank settler outpost," May 21, 2009, at http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-05-21-israel-westbank_N.htm
- ⁴ Justus Reid Weiner, *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation of an Alarming Global Phenomenon*, 2003
- ⁵ Ricki Hollander and Gilad Ini, "BBC Panorama Distorts the Facts About Jerusalem," *CAMERA*, January 21, 2010, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_print=1&x_context=55&x_article=1789
- ⁶ Nadav Shragai, "Demography, Geopolitics, and the Future of Israel's Capital," *JCPA*, 2010, at <http://jcpa.org/article/demography-geopolitics-and-the-future-of-israels-capital-jerusalem-proposed-master-plan/>; Justus Reid Weiner, "Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation of an Alarming Global Phenomenon," *JCPA*, 2003, at <http://www.jcpa.org/jlmbldg.htm>; Alex Safian, "The Professor's Truth Demolition," *CAMERA*, n.d. at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=19&x_article=898
- ⁷ Nadav Shragai, "Demography, Geopolitics, and the Future of Israel's Capital," *JCPA*, 2010, at <http://jcpa.org/article/demography-geopolitics-and-the-future-of-israels-capital-jerusalem-proposed-master-plan/>; Justus Reid Weiner, "Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation of an Alarming Global Phenomenon," *JCPA*, 2003, at <http://www.jcpa.org/jlmbldg.htm>; Alex Safian, "The Professor's Truth Demolition," *CAMERA*, n.d. at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=19&x_article=898
- ⁸ ICHAD, "Demolishing Homes, Demolishing Peace," page 3 at http://www.icaad.org/sites/default/files/Demolishing%20Homes%20Demolishing%20Peace_1.pdf
- ⁹ Tamar Sternthal, "Dissembling Demolitions," *CAMERA*, December 15, 2003, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_article=595&x_context=2
- ¹⁰ Steve Erlanger, "A Gaza War Full of Traps and Trickery," *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 2009 at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/world/middleeast/11hamas.html?_r=1&hp and Lorenzo Cremonesi, *Corriere della Sera*, Jan. 21, 2009 at http://www.corriere.it/esteri/09_gennaio_21/denuncia_hamas_cremonesi_ac41c6f4-e802-11dd-833f-00144f02aabc.shtml (tr. Excerpts at http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Behind+the+Headlines/Hamas_crimes_in_Gaza_29-Jan-2009.htm) Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "Hamas Exploitation of Civilians as Human Shields," Jan. 2009 at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e028.pdf and Azmi Keshawi, "Hamas fighter: 'We fight Israel one day on, one day off,'" *Times (UK)*, Jan. 7, 2009 at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5462121.ece; Pesach Benson, "Hamas Using Hospital As Cover for Rocket Launch," *Honest Reporting*, November 20, 2012, at <http://honestreporting.com/hamas-using-hospital-as-cover-for-rocket-launch/>
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