

**January 2018**

**ACT Palestine Forum Prayer Focus: Home Demolitions**

“Perhaps the Most Beautiful Memories are Those of a Place”



Photo by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture student, Mahmoud al-Kurd; winner of the Karimeh Abboud Photography Award.

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## **Background:**

Demolishing homes as a form of collective punishment is one of the most extreme measures that Israel has employed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since the occupation began in 1967 (and until 2005, in the Gaza Strip). Over the years, Israel has demolished hundreds of houses as part of this policy, leaving thousands of Palestinians homeless.

The policy of punitive house demolition is, by definition, meant to harm people who have done nothing wrong and are suspected of no wrongdoing, but are related to Palestinians who attacked or attempted to attack Israeli civilians or security forces. In almost all cases, the individual who carried out the attack or planned to do so no longer lives in the house, as they were killed by Israeli security forces during the attack or were arrested and face a long prison sentence in Israel.

This policy constitutes collective punishment, which is prohibited and violates binding provisions of international law.

More information found here: [B'Tselem](#)

“No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.”

### **- The Geneva Convention Statement**

“The government of Israel has not learned the lesson that Ezekiel was trying to teach his people. It practices collective punishment against Palestinians. It punishes the whole family and the whole town for the “crime” of one or two people. It demolishes their family homes and causes the homelessness of many people for a crime they did not commit.”

- **Father Naim S. Ateek**, *A Palestinian Theology of Liberation: The Bible, Justice, and the Palestine-Israel Conflict*, page 67.

## **Readings:**

### **Ezekiel 19:20, NASV**

The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

### **Luke 19:1-10, NASV**

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to his house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

### **Responsive Prayer:**

#### **Psalm 46:8-11**

Come, behold the works of the Lord;

**See what desolations he has brought on the earth.**

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;

**he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;**

**he burns the shields with fire.**

"Be still, and know that I am God!

**I am exalted among the nations,**

**I am exalted in the earth."**

The Lord of hosts is with us;

**The God of Jacob is our refuge.**

### **Prayer:**

*God of refuge and strength,*

We pray for those who are terrified, living in fear, fleeing danger, and seeking safety. May those who are left with nothing know that they are not forgotten.

We ask for the provision of resources so that people's needs are met. We ask for food, homes, and property.

We pray that the innocent be protected. We ask for the protection of family members of offenders, that they be treated with fairness.

We pray for your strength for those who are caring and providing aid; may they know your help as they help others.

Would you give grace to your church, as they seek to live the life that Jesus called them to and to love their neighbor, not harm their neighbor.

Would you give wisdom to governments and leaders of the international community as they respond to this crisis. Give them clarity of mind and generosity of heart.

We look with hope to the day when wars will cease, collective punishment will cease, and that there will be eternal peace.

*Amen.*

\*Adapted from Christ Church London "Prayer for Displaced Peoples"

### **Opportunities for Advocacy:**

Listed here are a few sources that invite you to advocate for an end to Palestinian home demolitions as collective punishment:

[Christian Peacemaker Teams](#)

[The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions](#)

[Passia Occupation Fact Sheet](#)