

Escalating Demolitions in the West Bank Including East Jerusalem: Mid-Year Review 2024



Fact Sheet

July 2024

Overview

While global attention remains fixed on the genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza, a silent war also continues to escalate in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Israeli occupation has intensified their control over the region, leading to extensive demolitions, resulting in significant displacement, and deteriorating living conditions. **In the first half of 2024, a total of 649 structures were demolished across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, displacing 1,232 individuals.** However, this number does not portray the thousands who have also been forcibly displaced due to settler attacks. These demolitions have had extreme impacts on Palestinians, leading to significant displacement and loss of livelihoods. Simultaneously, plans for further settler expansion predict more demolitions and land confiscations, further imbedding the occupation's colonial domination over Palestinian land.

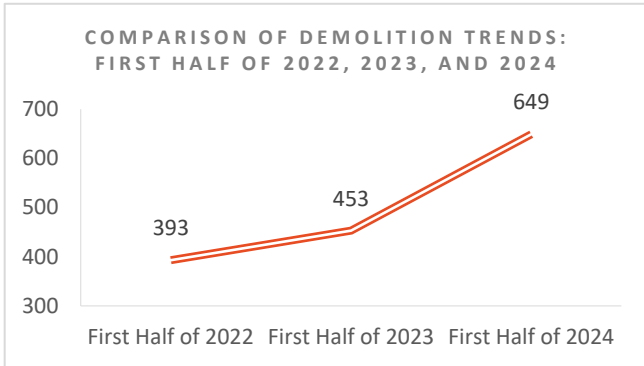
About JLAC

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC) is a Palestinian non-governmental organization mandated with providing pro-bono legal aid and consultation in the defense of human rights, both in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank. JLAC has coupled its legal aid with public interest cases, legal reform, community awareness, and advocacy.



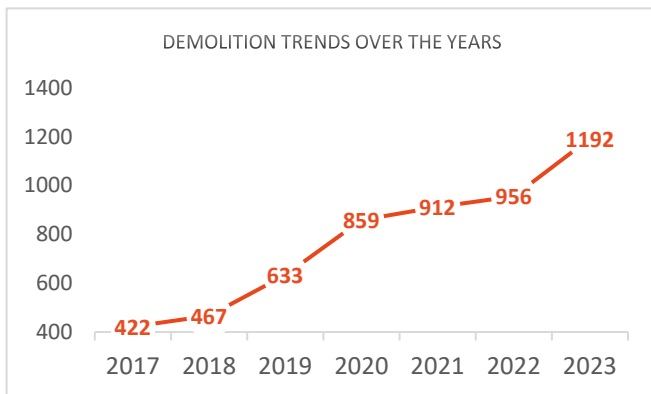
High Increase in Demolitions

In the first half of 2024 alone, 649 structures were demolished across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a 43% increase from the first half of 2023 and a 65% increase from the first half of 2022. These demolitions have targeted various types of structures, each contributing to the severe disruption of Palestinian life.

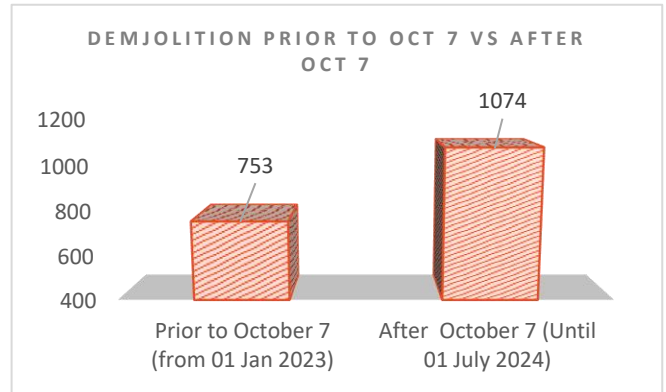


The policy to demolish Palestinian structures in the West Bank including East Jerusalem has existed long before October 7, 2023, dating back to the aftermath of the 1967 war. However, in recent years, the trend of demolitions has significantly increased. Since October 7, 2023, there has been a notable escalation in demolitions across the West Bank. This period has witnessed continued demolitions in West Bank including East Jerusalem, alongside heightened incursions into Palestinian cities, including refugee camps. These actions have led to increased demolitions and extensive damage to property and infrastructure. In addition, demolitions occur not only in Area C but also in Areas A and B, often justified under the pretext of security concerns.

To provide a broader context, the graph below shows the demolition trends over the years from 2017 until 2023, illustrating the escalating pattern over time.



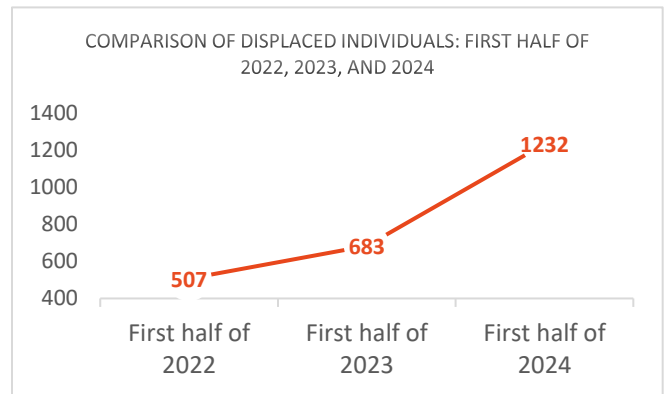
After October 7th, a total of 1,074 demolitions took place. Comparing this with the period prior to October 7th, a noticeable increase is observed, emphasizing the very sharp escalation post-October 7th.



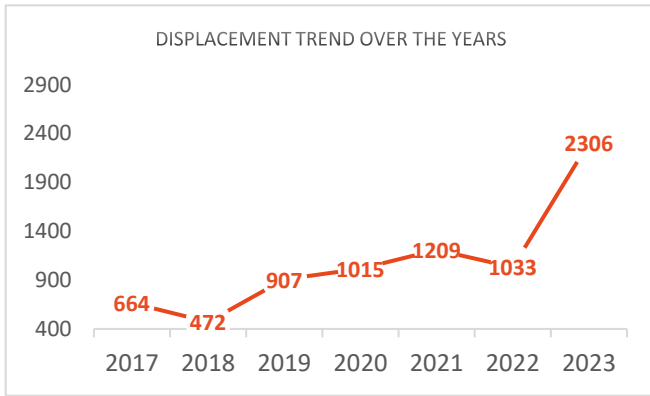
Demographic Impact

The demolitions displaced a total of 1,232 people in the first half of 2024. Children were significantly affected, with boys making up about 22% and girls 23% of those displaced. Vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities, face heightened challenges due to the loss of their places of shelter.

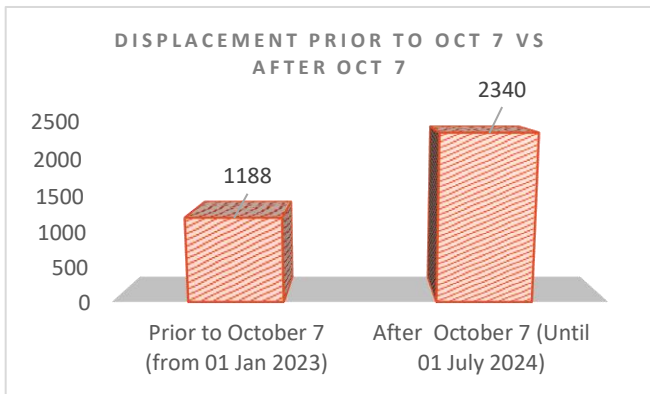
In comparison with the same period last year, this year presents an 80% increase in displacement. Additionally, comparison with the same period in 2022, this year illustrates a 360% increase in displacement. This displacement has been worsening the already difficult living conditions, increasing dependency on humanitarian aid and support services.



To provide a broader context, the graph below shows the trend of displacement over the years from 2017 to 2023, highlighting the escalating impact on Palestinians.

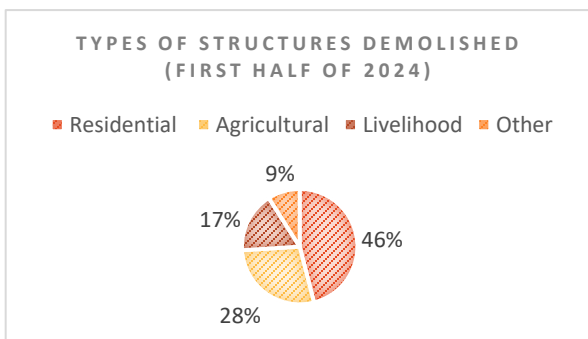


In addition, the number of displaced people has significantly increased after October 7, 2023, simultaneously with the increase in demolitions. Comparing the periods prior to October 7th, and after it, emphasizes the sharp increase in displacement post-October 7th.



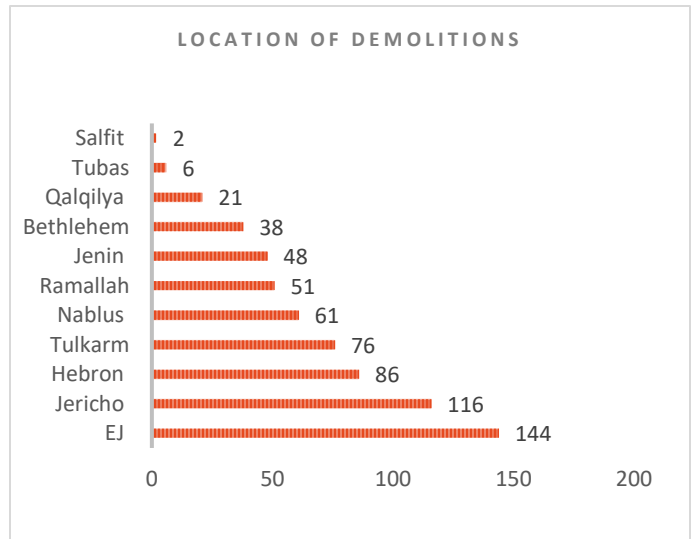
Types of Structures Demolished

Of the 649 structures demolished in the first half of 2024, 46% were residential buildings, resulting in the displacement of many families and causing severe disruption to community life. Agricultural structures made up 28% of the demolitions, impacting local food production and farmers' livelihoods. Livelihood-related structures constituted 17% of the demolitions, adversely affecting the economic stability of the affected individuals. Critical WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) installations, infrastructure demolitions (including essential utilities such as roads and power lines), and community centers and other essential facilities together accounted for 9% of the demolitions, further complicating public health, sanitation efforts, and social infrastructure.

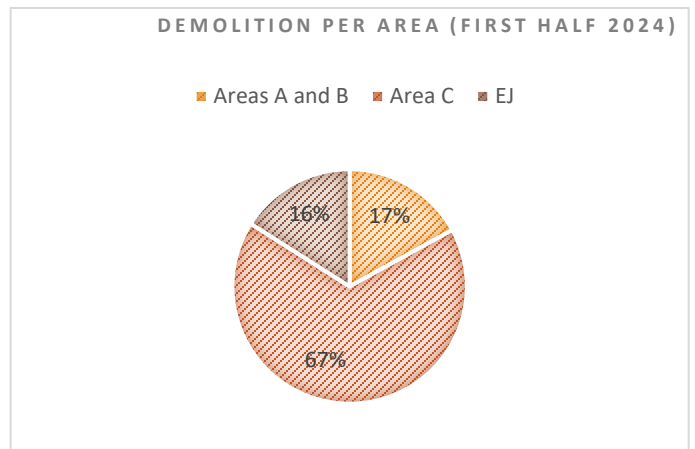


Geographic Distribution of Demolitions

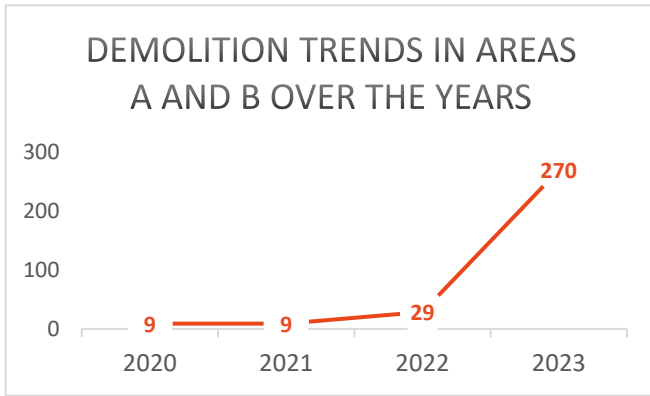
The geographic distribution of demolitions indicates a widespread impact across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. East Jerusalem experienced the highest number, accounting for 22% of the total demolitions. Jericho witnessed 18%, while Hebron accounted for 13%. Other affected areas included Tulkarm with 12%, Nablus with 9%, Ramallah with 8%, Jenin with 7%, Bethlehem with 6%, Qalqilya with 3%, Tubas with 1%, and Salfit with 0.3%. This widespread distribution highlights the extensive reach of the demolition activities.



In addition, it is important to highlight that demolitions are not only happening in Areas C and in East Jerusalem but also in Areas A and B. The rate of demolitions in Areas A and B is further increasing.



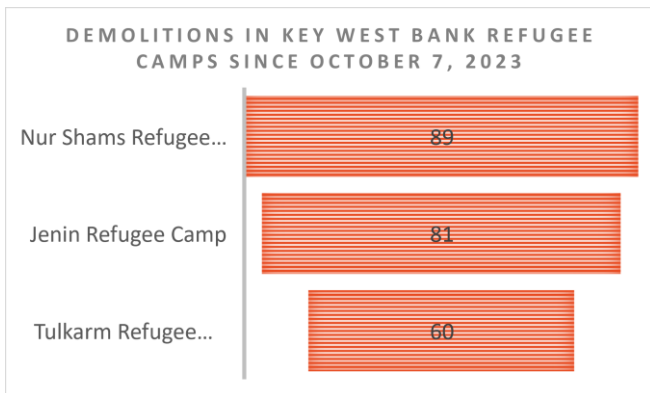
To provide a general context for the increase in demolitions occurring in Areas A and B, below is a graph indicating the trend of demolitions in these areas over the last few years.



Additionally, since October 7, demolitions in Areas A and B have been increasing significantly, often through military incursions into these areas under the pretense of security concerns. This escalation highlights a broader pattern of demolition activities extending beyond Area C and East Jerusalem, impacting Palestinians everywhere.

New Trend of Demolitions: Military Operations Against Refugee Camps

In addition to the rising trend of demolitions across various regions of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a new and alarming pattern has emerged: demolitions related to intensified military operations specifically targeting refugee camps. Since the start of the genocidal war on Gaza, Israel has ramped up attacks on refugee camps in the occupied West Bank, particularly focusing on areas such as the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, the Jenin refugee camp, Tulkarm Refugee Camp, and others. These operations have led to extensive demolitions and severe disruptions for the inhabitants of these camps.



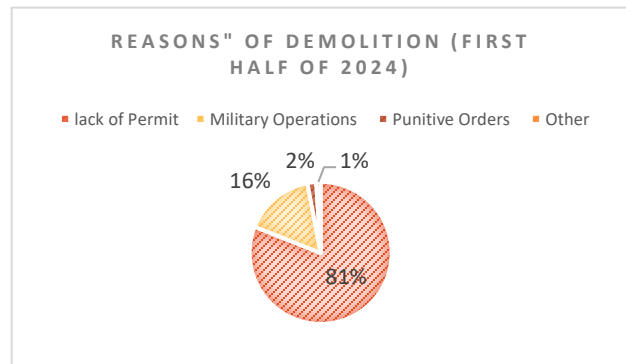
Case Study: Nur Shams Refugee Camp

Nur Shams refugee camp, located in the northern part of the West Bank and roughly three kilometers east of Tulkarm City, was established in 1952 to accommodate refugees from the Nakba. The camp holds significant historical and social importance. The lack of hope, specifically after the genocidal war on Gaza, fueled different types of protest within the camp which made it a frequent target for Israeli occupation military attacks. After October 7, 2023, there have been 28 military

operations conducted by Israeli occupation forces in the camp. Approximately 80 Palestinians from the camp have been killed by Israeli occupation forces during this period. The demolitions have been extensive, with over 89 structures completely demolished and hundreds of others partially damaged, leading to the displacement of around 433 individuals, along with the destruction of infrastructure in the camp.

Legal Context

The primary reasons cited for the demolitions include the lack of permits, which accounted for 81% of the cases. Military operations were responsible for 16% of the demolitions, while punitive orders made up 2%. Israeli policies, such as stringent zoning and planning regulations, significantly limit Palestinian construction in these areas.



It is also worth mentioning that 99% of Palestinians' requests to obtain a building permit in Area C and East Jerusalem are rejected. This extremely high rejection rate is due to a complex and restrictive permitting process that makes it nearly impossible for Palestinians to legally build homes, schools, and infrastructure. As a result, many Palestinians build without permits out of necessity, making their structures vulnerable to demolition. This policy effectively restrains Palestinian development and contributes to overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor living conditions in these areas.

Call for Action

The first half of 2024 has seen a marked increase in both the number of demolitions and the resultant displacement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This significant increase in demolition trends completely disrupts Palestinian lives and underscores the obligation on the international intervention to uphold human rights and enforce international law in the region. Measures must be implemented to protect Palestinian civilians from further demolitions and displacement, and there must be accountability for violations of international law, ensuring that those responsible for unlawful demolitions and displacements are held to account.