

TOWARDS A 'ONE-STATE REALITY' IN W. ASIA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India- West Asia

Resisting demolition: People protesting against the proposed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar village in West Bank. **AFPAHMAD GHARABLI**

For the anxious Palestinian residents of Khan al-Ahmar, there's little left to do but wait. After the West Bank hamlet lost its last legal protection against demolition late last week, Israeli forces could swoop in any day now to tear down the desert community's few dozen shacks and an Italian-funded schoolhouse made from recycled tyres.

Khan al-Ahmar is located a few dozen metres from a four-lane highway that runs east-west, effectively slicing the West Bank in half at a narrow waist and linking Jerusalem with the Jordan Valley.

The highway is also flanked by several Israeli settlements. A new settlement across the highway would effectively block the remaining land link between West Bank Palestinians and east Jerusalem, their hoped-for capital.

The U.S. State Department has said little about the looming demolition.

By contrast, European governments have been outspoken. France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom warned in a rare joint statement that demolition would have "very serious" consequences.

Khan al-Ahmar is in the 60% of the West Bank that is known as Area C and remains under full Israeli control. Area C is home to about 4,00,000 Israeli settlers and an estimated 1,50,000 to 2,00,000 Palestinians. Israel places severe restrictions on Palestinian development while supporting and promoting dozens of settlements in the area.

"This is the situation on the ground — new settlements for Israelis are built, while Palestinian homes in the same area are demolished," said EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. "This will only further entrench a one-state reality, with unequal rights for the two peoples, perpetual occupation and conflict."

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