

The Demolition of Al-Rahma Dairy Plant in Hebron



Date: 24/9/2014

Ref Number: 109/2014

Since September 2000, hundreds of Palestinian shops, workshops, factories and public buildings, including government offices, [have been destroyed or damaged](#) beyond repair by the Israeli authorities. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Economy in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the summer 2014 Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, 113 factories were destroyed while 647 others were damaged or partially destroyed.

In the West Bank on 2 September 2014, Israeli forces demolished the Al-Rahma dairy plant located in Wad Abun, north Hebron city, which is classified as Area C and as such is under full Israeli civil and military control. The factory was owned by the Islamic Charitable Association (the Association) in Hebron. The factory was approximately 3,000 metres squared (m²), 700m² of which was built from stone and concrete, while the remainder was built from tin sheets. The entire building was demolished.

At approximately 4:30 A.M., a group of Israeli forces equipped with two Hyundai drillers, a JCB driller, two military bulldozers, a Hidromek bulldozer and two further bulldozers arrived at the factory. The Israeli forces were accompanied by a group of workers from a privately owned company. The workers proceeded to empty the factory, after which the demolition process began. The demolition and dredging lasted for more than two hours.

In 2002, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued a stop work order on a cow farm that previously occupied the land on which the dairy was subsequently built. The cow farm was also owned by the Islamic Charitable Association. On 7 March 2002, this was followed by a demolition order. In response, the Association applied for a building permit and appealed the demolition order. Since then, no decision had been made by the ICA. One of the permit requirements included obtaining a certificate from the Israeli Antiquity Authority proving that no historical remnants are located on the land. In 2003 the Association took the decision to transfer the cows to a different location and build the dairy plant in place of the cow farm.

On 26 August 2008, Israeli forces raided the offices and buildings belonging to the Islamic Charitable Association, including storage rooms, schools, and nurseries. They delivered notices and orders to close these buildings and transfer the ownership to the Israeli military. During the raids, Israeli forces confiscated equipment and damaged machinery. They claimed that the Association is affiliated with Hamas.

Later, with the help of the Palestinian Authority, the Association's administrative committee was dissolved and replaced by one whose members were approved by the Israeli authorities. Since then, the Israeli authorities have withdrawn their ownership of these buildings and the Association's newly formed administrative committee has been in charge.

On 19 and 20 June 2014 during so-called "Operation Brother's Keeper" in the West Bank, the Israeli authorities resumed their attacks against the Association. They raided their offices and buildings in the city of Hebron, Bani Nu'em, Beit Awla and al-Shuyukh. After confiscating a number of documents, they sealed the offices and buildings shut using "oxy-fuel welding" (using oxygen). The Israeli forces attached military orders to the offices' doors demanding that they remain closed until 31 December 2014, for alleged security reasons.

On the evening of 19 June, Israeli forces delivered an order issued by the ICA to Al-Rahma dairy factory. The order granted the Association an opportunity to appeal the demolition order from 2002 that had been applicable to the cow farm, provided it was within three days. This opportunity was presented on a Thursday. It is important to note that Israeli and Palestinian governmental offices are both closed on Fridays and Saturdays.

On 23 June the Association's lawyer objected to the new demolition order but the following day the appeal was rejected. The lawyer immediately pleaded to the Supreme Court requesting that it halt the demolition until all work had been completed on the case file. The lawyer was shocked when the prosecutor responded by stating that the new demolition order was due to the Association's affiliation with Hamas. The prosecutor also accused one of the workers at the factory named Jawad Yehia al-Ja'bari, 47, who has been in administrative detention for 20 months, of being a Hamas affiliate. The Court scheduled another session for 7 September 2014 but did not issue an injunction on the demolition order.

On 2 July without prior warning, Israeli forces confiscated the factory's equipment. They did not provide any confiscation orders. On 2 September, the factory was demolished.

The head of the Association's Administrative Committee, Hatem al-Bakri, estimates that the equipment confiscated was worth approximately USD 800,000. The buildings that were demolished were worth roughly USD 1.2 million. The plant produced six tons of dairy products daily and employed 25 workers. It is worth noting that the plant's revenues are used by the Association to provide for orphans and the poor. The Association supports around 3,500 orphans, 300 of whom live in two orphanages run by the Association. The Association also runs eight schools.

