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# Israeli Army to Demolish 180 Homes in West Bank Palestinian Refugee Camps

The Israeli cabinet updated its war goals in January to include the West Bank, meaning that extensive Israeli forces entered the refugee camps, the air force stepped up aerial attacks in the region, and thousands of residents were evicted from their homes

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Israeli army armored vehicles in Jenin, in the West Bank, in March. Credit: Jaafar Ashtiyeh / AFP

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Mar 21, 2025 4:26 pm IST

The Israeli army announced its intention this week to demolish about 95 homes in the Jenin refugee camp and around 85 homes in the Al Ein refugee camp near the West Bank city of Nablus.

The stated goal is to change the routes of roads inside the camps and widen them so they'll be accessible to armored vehicles.

Meanwhile, the army believes that the operation in the Tulkarm refugee camp has run its course, but forces continue to occupy homes that have become command centers, and soldiers are preventing residents from returning home.

Houses slated for demolition in the Jenin refugee camp. Credit: Israel Defense Forces

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During Operation Iron Wall, which the army launched in January, more than 30,000 refugee camp residents were expelled from their homes. About half of the evacuees are from the Tulkarm and Nur al-Shams camps.

Soldiers have demolished countless homes to expand the roads to allow the army easy access throughout the camps, and the demolitions are ongoing.

Besides the operations inside the camps, defense establishment officials say they believe Israel can reach an understanding with Palestinian security forces and hand over responsibility for managing Tulkarm to them.

Palestinians stand amid rubble in Tulkarm, in the West Bank, in February. Credit: Fadi Yassen / Reuters

The army has maintained security cooperation with Palestinian Authority forces throughout the operation. According to reports, in many cases, when Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists fled areas that the army had entered, Palestinian forces arrested them. PA officials do not rule out the possibility of building police stations in these camps to increase supervision.

In February, Ephraim Brigade commander Col. N said he expected that the army would need to continue operating in the Tulkarm refugee camp for several months, requiring hundreds of soldiers. "We must preserve here continuous activity, and, when we leave, maintain patrols and infantry operations," he said.

In January, Defense Minister Israel Katz announced that the army would remain in the Jenin refugee camp even after completing its planned operation there.

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New IDF chief of staff Eyal Zamir said during a situational assessment in in the West Bank on Wednesday: "We launched a surprising and powerful operation in Gaza, with the supreme goal being the return of all the hostages. We are committed to that goal in every operation. When we talk about defeating Hamas, it's everywhere – here too in Judea and Samaria."

He told the troops, "Continue ongoing operations to thwart terror alongside providing strong defense."

Beyond signing the Gaza cease-fire agreement in January, the cabinet also updated its goals for the war to include the West Bank.

Accordingly, large numbers of forces entered the refugee camps, the air force stepped up aerial attacks in the region, residents were evicted from their homes and the army added countless barriers on roads, making the lives of Palestinians even harder.

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