



July 2015

**Tell your elected officials: I care about peace, I care about Susiya**

*"Living with all things 'Under Military Occupation' burdens ones heart, one's soul, one's life. My heart breaks, my heart cries for the struggle, the struggle for all here in this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike, Muslims, Jews and Christians all living in struggle in differing levels of intensity. I believe that this conflict, this occupation and subjection of another's land and life is eroding the soul of all." -- Rev. David Etherington, serving in the Palestinian village of Susiya with the Ecumenical Accompaniment program of the World Council of Churches.*

The burden of the decades-long Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is felt from Gaza where on the one year anniversary of a devastating war the tiny enclave still lies in ruins, to the Cremisan Valley near Bethlehem where a court victory to stop building the separation wall on private Palestinian land has now been undone by a more recent court decision. As pressure steps up on a number of fronts, the Village of Susiya is a salient example of where advocacy is urgently needed.

A July 15 [press release](#) from Rabbis for Human Rights and B'Tselem describes a meeting of Israeli officials with village residents:

The officials told residents that the authorities refrained from demolitions during the month of Ramadan to show consideration, but that this humanitarian respite will end with the holy month, after the holiday of 'Eid al-Fitr. Based on these statements, residents assume that demolitions could take place as early as next week.

**To answer the need, [the Rebuilding Alliance](#) and partners are sending a message to government leaders telling them, "I care about peace, I care about Susiya," and Rep. Anna Eshoo has issued a letter to Secretary Kerry which she invites her colleagues to sign. The letter urges Secretary Kerry,**

to take immediate action to prevent the demolition of the Palestinian village of Susiya and prevent the continuing demolition of Palestinian neighborhoods, farmlands, and olive orchards in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and in Israel. We hope your intervention, amplified by the concern of citizens and countries throughout the world, will assure the safety of the Palestinian Village of Susiya.

**Contact your elected officials today. Ask them to: Add their name to the Eshoo letter – ask Senators to initiate a similar letter – and ask them to call the State Department and the Israeli Embassy. Find your representative [here](#), and your senators [here](#).**

Background:

Villagers in Susiya have already suffered a history of displacement. A 2015 UN [report](#) recounts, "In 1986, the Israeli authorities declared the main residential area of Susiya an archaeological site and evicted all of its residents. Most of those who relocated to what was later designated as Area C were displaced again in the context of two waves of demolitions, in 2001 and in 2011, on grounds of lack of building permits."

The same UN report notes that the illegal Israeli settlement of Susya, located next to the Palestinian village, “has a population of nearly 1,000, some of whom live in an unauthorized outpost erected in 2002 in the old community centre that was declared an archeological site.”

While the situation in Susiya is not unique, it is particularly urgent. In May the Israeli court refused to issue an order prohibiting demolitions during an appeal which is scheduled to be heard on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. As Rabbis for Human Rights [explains](#), “The judge’s decision is de facto permission for the State to realize the demolition orders in the village, that has stood in its present location for 30 years.”

Advocates for Susiya are hoping that this village can stand as an example of the success of peaceful action. Etherington quotes a villager, “...today, when we cry out, the world hears us, many around the world hear our struggle and...stand in solidarity with us and our struggle.”

**Given the urgency, in addition to writing, please also CALL your [representative](#) today to alert them to the issue and to ask them to join the Eshoo letter to Secretary Kerry.**

### **Sample Letters:**

Dear Representative,

As a person of faith who is deeply troubled by the lack of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, I write to you today to ask you to address concerns about the Palestinian village of Susiya, located in the occupied West Bank, whose residents are at risk of having their homes demolished by the Israeli authorities.

While the situation in Susiya is not unique, it is particularly urgent. A July 15 press release by two Israeli human rights organizations, Rabbis for Human Rights and B’Tselem says, “The officials told residents that the authorities refrained from demolitions during the month of Ramadan to show consideration, but that this humanitarian respite will end with the holy month, after the holiday of 'Eid al-Fitr. Based on these statements, residents assume that demolitions could take place as early as next week.” In addition, In May the Israeli court refused to issue an order prohibiting demolitions during an appeal which is scheduled to be heard on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

I ask you to raise this urgent concern with the US State Department by adding your name to a letter to Secretary Kerry being circulated by Rep. Anna Eshoo and by calling the US State Department and the Israeli Embassy. For the sake of a peaceful future for all, urge officials to assure that the Palestinian village of Susiya, along with other threatened Palestinian villages, remains standing.

Thank you for your service and for your attention to my concerns,

Dear Senator,

As a person of faith who is deeply troubled by the lack of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, I write to you today to ask you to address concerns about the Palestinian village of Susiya, located in the occupied West Bank, whose residents are at risk of having their homes demolished by the Israeli authorities.

While the situation in Susiya is not unique, it is particularly urgent. A July 15 press release by two Israeli human rights organizations, Rabbis for Human Rights and B'Tselem says, "The officials told residents that the authorities refrained from demolitions during the month of Ramadan to show consideration, but that this humanitarian respite will end with the holy month, after the holiday of 'Eid al-Fitr. Based on these statements, residents assume that demolitions could take place as early as next week." In addition, In May the Israeli court refused to issue an order prohibiting demolitions during an appeal which is scheduled to be heard on August 3rd.

I ask you to raise this urgent concern with the US State Department by initiating a letter in the Senate to Secretary Kerry similar to the letter which is being circulated in the House by Rep. Anna Eshoo, and by calling the US State Department and the Israeli Embassy. For the sake of a peaceful future for all, urge officials to assure that the Palestinian village of Susiya, along with other threatened Palestinian villages, remains standing.

Thank you for your service and for your attention to my concerns,