

CASE STUDY 3

FROM EAPPI
REPORTS

Rajeh

Ten minutes to leave home

Rajeh Hwareen is a Palestinian from the East Jerusalem suburb of Shu'afat in the West Bank. He lives with his wife and five children.

He is a paramedic, working for the Red Crescent, part of the humanitarian movement known in the UK and Ireland as the Red Cross. Shu'afat is located between two Israeli settlements, Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramat Shlomo.

“The thing that hit me the hardest while I was an EA was the proliferation of house demolitions.”



Rajeh Hwareen in the ruins of his house.



Rajeh's wife, sister-in-law and oldest son in the rubble of their home.

In 2016 Rajeh was at work when he got a call from his wife, telling him soldiers had arrived with a bulldozer. He rushed home.

Ecumenical companions (EAs) received a call, asking them to go to Shu'afat to see what was happening.

One of the EAs, Paul, recalls what happened:

“Rajeh Hwareen's family were given ten minutes to gather what belongings they could and leave before their home was destroyed.

“I asked Rajeh why his home had been demolished.

“He showed me a new road being built to connect two Israeli settlements and said his home was in the way!”

Rajeh's family invited the EAs to share their food and drink. Sitting in the rubble of his home afterwards, Rajeh said: “This is the face of the occupation. It has many faces, but I hope your countries will see this one.”

This was the second home Rajeh had lost. After having their previous home demolished, the family had built this new one in 2001. He tried and tried to get planning permission but was always refused by the Israeli authorities and ended up building without permission. Eventually, a demolition order was issued in 2012. He tried taking it to court but they just laughed at him, he says. Rajeh even asked if he could be given another piece of land to build on instead but this too was refused.

The Israeli government provides no compensation in cases like this.

Paul says, “I asked him how he was feeling and, fighting back the tears, he said: ‘I must be strong for my children, but inside...’ He couldn't finish the sentence. He said the Israelis want to drive them out of Jerusalem but confirmed ‘We will stay’.”