

Canadian Student Arrested by Israeli Forces for Protesting Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Village

By [Independent Jewish Voices](#)

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Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) is dismayed to learn that a Canadian student has been arrested by Israeli forces for protesting the [impending demolition](#) of the Palestinian-Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Michaela Lavis, 21, a Child and Youth Studies student at Ryerson University in Toronto, had joined Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights activists at the demonstration on Thursday morning. Lavis was part of a group of mainly foreigners who attempted to [block](#) one of the bulldozers by sitting in a line chained together in front of it. A staff-person with the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem was also [arrested](#) at the demonstration.

Lavis had been volunteering in the West Bank city of Ramallah with the human rights organization [Defence for Children International-Palestine](#). She had also been volunteering with an occupational therapist who provides support to special needs children.

The United Nations, European Union, Britain and France have all [demanded](#) that Israel halt plans to demolish the village. They noted that destroying the village would be an absolute contravention of International Humanitarian Law, which strictly prohibits the destruction or confiscation of private property by an occupying power.

The United Church of Canada is also [campaigning](#) to stop the demolition of the village, calling on Canadians to write to MPs urging the Canadian government to intervene.



Human rights activists, including Canadian Michaela Lavis, before being arrested by Israeli authorities in Khan Al-Ahmar

Khan Al-Ahmar residents belong to the Jahalin tribe of Bedouin. The Jahalin were forcibly expelled by Israeli forces to the West Bank from what is now southern Israel in the 1950s. Now, the Jahalin are again faced with compulsory transfer; this time to make way for illegal Israeli settlement expansion in the area. Israel's plan is to transfer Khan Al-Ahmar's 180 residents to an area adjacent to a garbage dump.

"As though demolishing their village wasn't egregious enough, Israel had decided to add insult to injury by transferring residents to a nearby trash dump," said Corey Balsam, IJV National Coordinator. "This sadly paints a rather accurate picture of the Israeli state's complete disregard for Palestinian life."

Israel claims that it is within its right to demolish the village, since the residents did not obtain construction permits, a requirement for Palestinians living in Area C. Area C accounts for more than 60% of the West Bank and is under full Israeli civil and military control.

"Israel's claim that they are doing this because of a lack of permits is a bogus excuse. There is no way they would have given permits to Khan Al-Ahmar residents and they know that," said Balsam.

Israel's objective in demolishing the village is widely known and has been the subject of years of diplomatic pressure. By expanding its settlements in the area, Israel [plans](#) to split the Palestinian West Bank into two and isolate East Jerusalem from West Bank Palestinian, thereby making the possibility of a Palestinian state even less likely.

"IJV calls for the Canadian government to push for the immediate release of

Michaela Lavis and to join its European allies in demanding that Israel immediately halt the demolition of Khan Al-Ahmar," concluded Balsam.

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