

Established before the occupation of Jerusalem...A decision to demolish the headquarters of Wadi Hilweh Information Center

July 3, 2024



Today, Wednesday, the occupation Municipal Court issued a decision ordering the demolition of the headquarters of the Wadi Hilweh Information Center in the town of Silwan, south of Al-Aqsa Mosque, under the pretext of “unlicensed construction.”

The Wadi Hilweh Information Center - Jerusalem explained in a statement that the municipality issued a decision to demolish the center, and the decision gives the director of the center, Jawad Siam, one year from today to implement it, in addition to imposing a fine of 20 thousand shekels. If the decision is not implemented within the specified period, the municipality will implement it, and a “demolition fee” will be imposed on the center for the municipality and its accompanying forces.

During the session, the Public Prosecution demanded the immediate demolition of the center and the imposition of a fine of 30,000 shekels. After hearing the deliberations, the judge issued the aforementioned decision.

The Wadi Hilweh Information Center building in the town of Silwan, is located at the entrance to the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood, the neighborhood closest to the southern wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque and overlooking it directly, and several meters away from the so-called “City of David,” the main settlement outpost in the neighborhood. This neighborhood that is threatened by “settlement projects”, and various settlement outposts above the ground, and a network of tunnels underground, to implement various projects.

The Information Center explained in its statement that the building threatened with demolition is one room with a total area of approximately 35 square meters, and it existed before the occupation. In 2009, the roof of the room was restored to protect it in rainy weather conditions, by replacing “zinc panels with wood panels.”

The center added that in 2009, the municipality issued a decision to demolish the center, and the decision was frozen at the time, under the pretext of “the sensitivity of the center’s

location,” after pictures were shown of settlers carrying out construction operations in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood and expanding settlement outposts, without permits.

The center explained that the municipality implemented the demolition decision in 2019, and held several sessions over the past years to discuss the decision, and at the beginning of this year the local committee for planning and construction and the municipality submitted an indictment against Jawad Siam, director of the center, which included “using a building without a license in an area where construction is prohibited.” Today, the final session was held and the decision was issued.

The Wadi Hilweh Information Center, which bears the name of the area in which it is located, was established in 2009. The center aims to monitor and document violations in the city of Jerusalem.

Jawad Siam, director of the Wadi Hilweh Information Center, confirmed that the center will continue its mission that it has followed since its founding 15 years ago, and the demolition decision will not deter it from monitoring violations, issuing reports and news, and daily following up on events in the city of Jerusalem.

Commenting on the demolition decision, Jawad Siam said: “The various Israeli institutions, most notably the municipality and the so-called “Nature and Parks Authority,” turned the center’s issue into “a case persecuting me personally,” and during the previous sessions the focus was on my activities on the one hand and on the work of the Wadi Hilweh Information Center on the other hand.

He pointed out that the municipality imposed a “property tax” on the center at a value of 12,500 shekels annually, even though it is a room with a wooden roof, despite providing evidence showing that the residents benefited from the center.

Siam added that many different violations were imposed on the center over the past years, including: a violation for the center’s main door, and a violation for placing “tape on the center’s door” to protect children while they were walking on the sidewalk in light of the lack of municipal services.

Siam added that the settlers filed many complaints against the center, and they also deliberately attended the sessions in recent years, until the demolition decision was issued.