The village of Al-Nabi Saleh is located 20km northwest of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Currently there are around 550 Palestinians who reside in the village. Recently the village has been the site of some of the most violently oppressed protests in the occupied Palestinian territories. The protests began following the confiscation of the Ein Al-Qaws spring, just a 10 minute walk from the village.

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The Ein al-Qaws Spring next to the village of Al-Nabi-Saleh. Settlers have installed benches and shading structures around the spring.
In December 2009, settlers from the nearby settlement of Halamish confiscated the spring, preventing Palestinians from accessing it. Following the confiscation, Palestinian protests were met by a violent response from the Israeli military. In early 2010, the Israeli Civil Administration declared the spring and the surrounding areas to be an archeological site, thus barring any use and development. Acting contrary to the Israeli government’s decision, the settlers from Halamish have developed the spring into a tourist picnic area. There has been no subsequent effort by the Israeli army to prevent the illegal development of the spring while Palestinians, on the other hand, are still completely prevented from accessing the area.\(^7\)

Under the supervision of the Israeli military, settlers have installed a shading structure, a swing set, and numerous benches. Meanwhile, signs were installed around the site changing the name to “the Meir Spring.” Furthermore, the spring has become a tourist attraction for visitors participating in settler solidarity trips.\(^8\) In addition to confiscating the land around the spring, the settlement of Halamish has appropriated 450 dunums of Palestinian land near the spring. Initially, Palestinians were prevented from reaching this land by a fence constructed by the settlers, but the Israeli High Court declared the fence to be illegal and ordered its removal. Although the fence was taken down, Palestinians are still prevented from reaching this land by the Israeli military and police. Thus, the Halamish settlement has effectively annexed this valuable land.\(^9\)

Many residents of Al-Nabi Saleh have been directly impacted by to restrictions imposed on them in this de-facto annexation. The first impact is that water prices in the village have risen since residents no longer have access to the spring, one of their natural water resources. Second, the settlement has de facto annexed olive trees adjacent to it that are watered by the spring, forcing over 10% of the village to lose a consistent supply of needed income.\(^10\) Third, as a result of non-violent protests in the village expressing opposition to this illegal appropriation of land and water, most of the residents have experienced violent repression carried out collectively against the village. This has caused many residents to experience symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and severe psychological insecurity.\(^11\)

Settler confiscation of the Ein al-Qaws spring has not only negatively impacted the villagers’ economic wellbeing, but has also brought with it harassment, intimidation, and physical violence carried out by Israeli settlers and the military. The continued strangling of this small and impoverished community sets a troubling precedent, as there are an additional 26 wells “at risk of settler takeover” in the West Bank, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.\(^12\)

(Endnotes)

2- MA’AN Development Center Interview, 28 August 2012, map was shown and documented.
7- MA’AN Development Center Interview, 28 August 2012.
8- See the picture to see the infrastructure installed by settlers, and a viewing of oneisraelfund.org shows guided tours to the spring as part of settler solidarity tours.
9- MA’AN Development Center Interview, 28 August 2012.
11- MA’AN Development Center Interview, 28 August 2012.