



## MA'AN's Jordan Valley Monthly Update

*MA'AN's monthly updates are not intended to be a news source, but instead offer information that is relevant or underreported in the region.*

August 2013



*Installing a roof for house renovations in the community of Furush Beit-Dajan.*

### *Settlement Creation*

**“The Mountains of Zion”**- In early August 2013, the Israeli army established a new pre-military academy in the Jordan Valley, located in the original homes of the settlement of Massu’a. This military academy will prepare Ultra-Orthodox (Haredim) Jews for the army.<sup>1</sup> Many similar institutions have been used as a tool for settlement creation and should be monitored closely.<sup>2</sup>

### *Settlement Expansion*

**Gilgal and Almog** – On 8 August 2013 the Israeli Civil Administration approved construction for 109 new housing units in the Jordan Valley.<sup>3</sup> Thirty-one of these houses will be built in the

settlement of Almog and 78 in the settlement of Gilgal. This will potentially double the population of Gilgal and increase the settler population by 50% in Almog.<sup>4</sup>

### *Employment in the Jordan Valley*

**Settlements** – The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics recently published a report about Palestinian employment. The report estimates that approximately 20,000 Palestinians are currently working in Israeli settlements in the West Bank.<sup>5</sup> Many thousands of these Palestinians are from the Jordan Valley and work in the agricultural settlements where they are paid a fraction of the guaranteed salaries legally mandated under Israeli law such as health care, social security, and paid sick leave.



Both photos are of the new Ultra-Orthodox pre-military academy in the central Jordan Valley, named Mountains of Zion

### Demolitions

**Khirbet Yarza** – On 1 August 2013, Israeli authorities distributed approximately 25 demolition orders to Palestinians in the community Khirbet Yarza in the northern Jordan Valley. In addition, the Israeli authorities attempted to coerce Palestinians in the area to sign documents stating that Yarza's land was in fact Israeli land. MA'AN's interviews with residents revealed that Israeli authorities attempted to persuade residents' signature in exchange for building permits for homes.<sup>6</sup>

## MA'AN in the Jordan Valley

**Growing Farmers' Market Independence** - In August 2013, MA'AN will install cold rooms to support 11 date farmers in the village of Marj al-Ghazal in the Jordan Valley. The rooms have a capacity to store 200 tons. Supported by Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS), and now in its third year of implementation, the project will strengthen the marketing independency of farmers year round according to technical specifications that preserve the quality of dates.

**Enhancing Independent Livelihoods with Solar Technology** - With the support of the Kadoorie Charitable Foundation, MA'AN is working with the community of Ras al-Auja to improve sustainable livelihoods through solar technology. After installing solar panels to run refrigerator units and other electrical needs in July, the project will now begin a pilot project with solar ovens and also begin the local production of green fodder so that these communities may supply themselves with a less expensive, organic method of feeding their herds. This is a more sustainable alternative to the expensive animal feed they must typically purchase from Israeli companies.

**Preparing Youth Labor Market** – Through a multi-year project with Save the Children, MA'AN is implementing a project to increase youth access to vocational training and university education opportunities and preparedness in order to better align themselves with labor market needs. This month, the project will be implementing two *Training of Trainers* in Career Development and Mapping of Job Opportunities for 24 Jordan Valley youth.

**Paving Avenues for Self-Expression and Networking Among Jordan Valley Youth** – With a small grant from World Vision, MA'AN has begun this initial training for what will begin two months of youth photography throughout the Jordan Valley. Twelve young photographers will take pictures of themes relevant to their lives in the region, while a professional photographer coaches them in the process. These photos will be compiled into a series of photo essays that will be distributed to various news outlets, and published in a photo essay book.

### (Endnotes)

- 1 MA'AN Development Center, Field Work, 3 August 2013.
- 2 For an example of how an educational institution was used to create and expand a settlement, please see "Ahavat Hayyim," *Cultivating Dispossession*, MA'AN Development Center (2013), p. 15.
- 3 Levinson, Chaim, *Israel Approves Plans for Hundreds of Residential Units in West Bank Settlements*, Ha'aretz (8 August 2013).
- 4 For more information on the two settlements, please see *Cultivating Dispossession*, MA'AN Development Center (2013), p. 5 and 9.
- 5 Abu Toameh, Khalid, *20,000 Palestinians Working in Settlements*, Survey Finds, Jerusalem Post (15 August 2013).
- 6 MA'AN Development Center, Field Work, 1 August 2013.