



MA'AN Development Center

M O V I N G

N O W H E R E

FIRING ZONES AND FORCIBLE TRANSFER IN THE JORDAN VALLEY







M O V I N G

N O W H E R E

FIRING ZONES AND FORCIBLE TRANSFER IN THE JORDAN VALLEY



2015



## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Physical Security	6
Eviction Orders And Demolition Orders	10
Psychological Security	18
Livelihood Reductions	22
Environmental Concerns	24
Water	26
Settler Violence	28
Issues Faced By Other Communities In Area C	32
International Humanitarian Law	36
Conclusion	40



# Introduction

*Indirect and direct forcible transfer is currently at the forefront of Israel's ideological agenda in area C. Firing zones, initially established as a means of land control, are now being used to create an environment so hostile that Palestinians are forced to leave the area or live in conditions of deteriorating security.*

Pre-dating the creation of the state of Israel, there was an ideological agenda within certain political spheres predicated on the notion that Israel should exist from the sea to the Jordan River. Upon creation of the State the subsequent governments sought to establish this notion. This has resulted in an uncompromising programme of colonisation, ethnic cleansing and de-development in Palestine. The conclusion of the six day war in 1967 marked the beginning of the ongoing occupation, under which the full force of the ideological agenda has been extended into the West Bank. Israel has continuously led projects and policies designed to appropriate vast amounts of Palestinian land in the West Bank, despite such actions being illegal under international law. The Israeli agenda has shown itself as determined to undermine Palestinian sovereignty and territorial continuity, thus preventing the creation of an independent Palestinian state. In 1993, the Oslo I Accords dictated that control of the West Bank and Gaza was to be divided between the Palestinian National Administration and Israel. Thus, 61% of the West Bank, mainly the Jordan Valley, came to be categorised as area 'C' and fell under full Israeli civil and military control<sup>1</sup>. Despite the agreement being suggested for a five year period during which time steps would be taken to grant Palestinian sovereignty, Israel has retained full control over these areas, cementing their wish to annex the Jordan Valley from the remainder of the West Bank and expel any remaining Palestinian citizens. As a result, the Palestinians living in area 'C' are facing an increasingly insecure future under precarious conditions.

Land acquisition has taken numerous forms, including the establishment of 137 Israeli recognised settlement blocs throughout the West Bank illegally housing 531,000 settlers<sup>2</sup>. However, one of the most aggressive and damaging policies to emerge was that of appropriating land under Military Order 1651, Article 318, which stated that 'A military commander is empowered to declare that an area or place are closed... for Israeli military usage'<sup>3</sup>. This led to the

*Firing zones are areas in which the Israeli army carry out military exercises; they often use live ammunition, which poses a risk to the local Palestinian population.*

1) B'Tselem, 2013. 'What is area C?'

2) B'Tselem, 2013, 'Land Expropriation and Settlements'.

3) IDF Mag Corps [Online] Available at: <<http://www.law.idf.il/602-6631-en/Patzar.aspx>> Accessed 16/10/2014.

establishment of a number of closed firing and military zones throughout area C; including the Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills. Firing zones are areas in which the Israeli army carries out military exercises and trainings; they often use live ammunition, despite the presence of the local Palestinian population. Palestinian presence within these areas is prohibited without prior permission from Israeli authorities, despite there being 10 Israeli settlement outposts either fully or partially located within firing zone boundaries. Existing Palestinian presence in firing zones has been deemed illegal by the Israeli Authorities and is thus submitted to extensive policies aimed at inducing their indirect or direct forcible transfer. Military zones are classified as areas that the military have chosen to close for security purposes. Currently, 30% of the West Bank is a closed military zone, 18% of which is a firing zone<sup>4</sup> in which military practises occur. Many firing zone boundaries lack boundary markings making it difficult for people to determine when they enter one. It has become clear that in recent years these zones are being exploited as a method to expel Palestinians whilst simultaneously protecting “illegal” settler communities. Dror Etkes, an Israeli expert on settlements, stated that Israeli Occupational Forces (IOF) confirmed this stance by stating they are the Israeli military’s number one method of enforcing expulsion in the West Bank<sup>5</sup>.

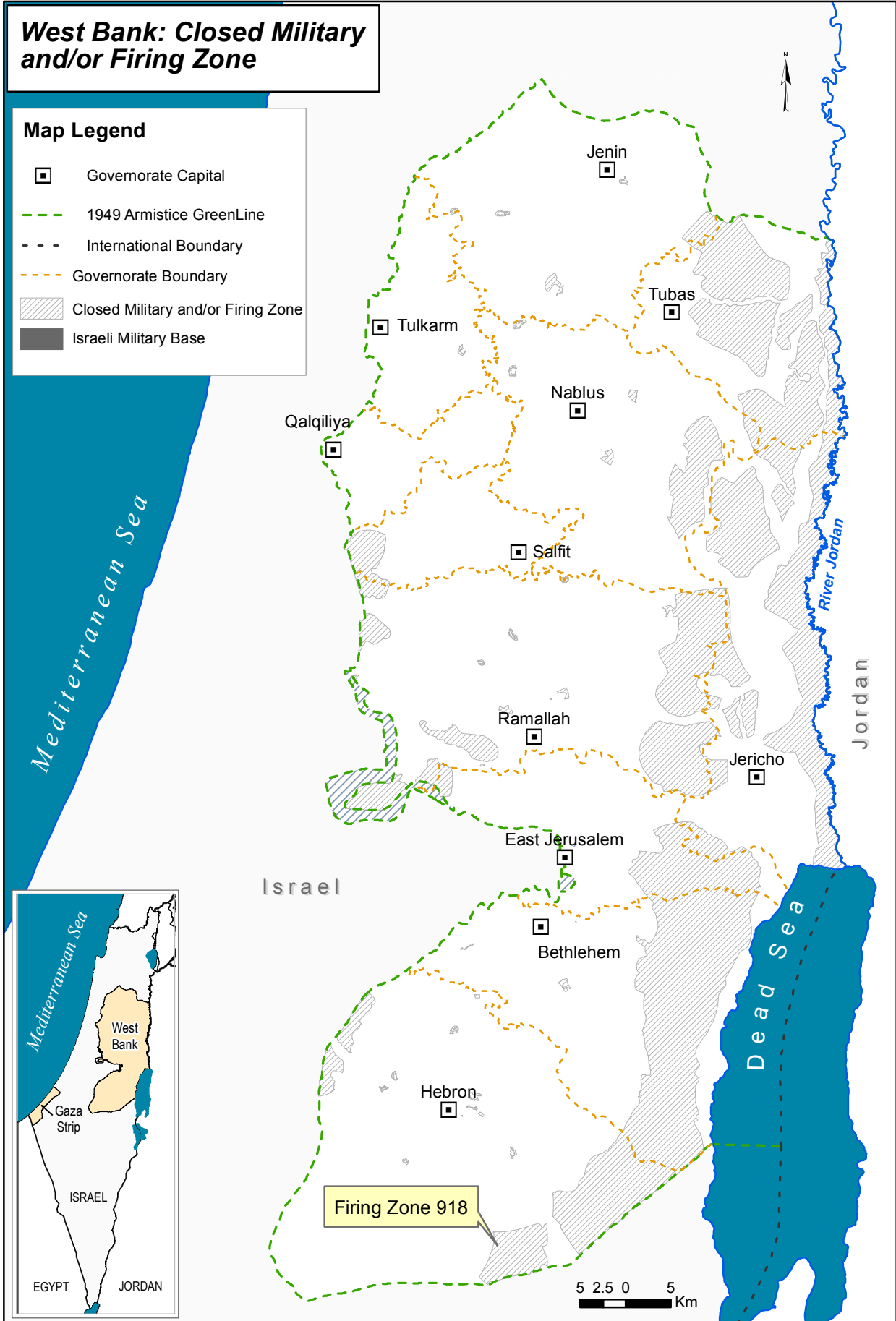
The existing population within firing zones are largely small herding communities, some of who were forced to relocate to the Jordan Valley following their mass expulsion from the Negev. There are 38 small communities located within or alongside the assumed firing zone boundaries with a population of 6,200<sup>6</sup>. Many of these communities pre-date 1967. Firing zone communities are characterised by dwindling livelihoods, high food insecurity, movement restrictions, high demolition and eviction rates and a lack of access to water. The majority have no choice but to frequently endure IOF live military exercises that occur metres away from their tents and military actions that have resulted in a significant increase in physical injury and death. The Israeli military’s failure to secure the perimeters of the zones has only served to increase this number of fatalities and casualties and further expose Palestinian residents to live ammunition and training remnants such as unexploded ordnance (UXO).

---

4) OCHA, 2014, ‘Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns’.

5) <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestinians-face-russian-roulette-israel-s-firing-zones-1389481475>

6) OCHA, 2014, ‘Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns’.



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# PHYSICAL SECURITY

The IOF pose a considerable threat to Palestinian physical security, 2014 saw a considerable rise in live ammunition being used against Palestinians with an average of eight injuries being inflicted by live ammunition per week<sup>7</sup>. This is a dramatic increase from 2013 when injuries caused by live ammunition only caused an average of one injury per week<sup>8</sup>. Live ammunition against Palestinians is used in two main locations, in protests and within firing zones. The use of live ammunition in firing zones is part of a wider policy to expel Palestinians from the Jordan Valley; other techniques include failing to secure known land mine sites and the correct disposal of unexploded ordnance following military exercises in Palestinian areas. These issues have accelerated in recent years after the IOF increased their training exercises in an attempt to both demonstrate the validity of firing zones following reports that many were disused and to expel Palestinian citizens.

7) <http://www.map-uk.org/news/archive/post/91-violence-and-displacement-marking-early-2014>

8) *Ibid*







Photo by Hamza Zbedot

Remnants of military trainings include two types of warfare, unexploded ordnance and landmines. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) has become a hazard for the local Palestinian population, remnants are often discarded following military trainings and often have to be sourced and destroyed by the residents themselves. Landmines are known worldwide to most often affect civilian populations and in Palestine cause injury and damage to the Palestinian civilian population. This is a clear breach of Israel's duty of care to civilians as the occupying power. UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service) reported 948 casualties from landmines and UXO between 2000-2012 all of which were Palestinian civilians (151 killed, 784 injured and 13 unknown as reported by UNMAS) in 2014, 8 Palestinians were killed and 39 were injured. There are an estimated 91 landmine locations throughout the West Bank, 77 of which are laid along the firing zone adjacent to the Jordan River serving as a frontier to Jordan<sup>9</sup>. They were laid as part of a war strategy by the IOF in 1967 and have been since acknowledged in a military statement as no longer holding any strategic value<sup>10</sup>. Exact details and locations of each site are held by the military thus reducing the extent to which other actors can locate and secure the areas<sup>11</sup>. As with firing zones, these sites are often not marked or fenced off resulting in civilians walking through the area causing grave injuries and fatalities.

As all landmines are situated in area 'C', the legal responsibility for securing and clearing mine sites rests with the Israeli National Mine Action Authority (INMAA)<sup>12</sup>. However they have made no effort to do so. Whilst there are other organisations attempting to secure sites and lobby for clearance, such as UNMAS and the Palestinian Mine Action Centre, they remain limited in their scope, as without exact locations of sites and permission to enter the sites from the Israeli authorities, they would be placing themselves in danger.

9) Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor; 2014. 'Country Profiles: Palestine'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region\\_profiles/print\\_profile/963](http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/963)>

10) *Ibid*

11) UNMAS, 2012. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/UNMAS%20OPT%20FACT%20Sheet%20-%20Sept.%202012.pdf>>

12) Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor; 2014. 'Country Profiles: Palestine'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region\\_profiles/print\\_profile/963](http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/963)>

## PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

*Ahmad Eid Zuhra<sup>13</sup>*

*recounts how he was injured by an UXO whilst tending his family's sheep. His family live in northern Hammamat al Maleh area which sits inbetween two firing zones close to the Tayasir checkpoint leading to Tubas, bordering the 578 road and the Maskiot settlement. The family live in a collection of tents, all of which have pending demolition orders on them and which could be carried out at any time. The family are reliant on herding as their only form of income and Ahmad has been responsible for the herd since he dropped out of school at a young age in order to contribute to the family's income:*

*"I am 20 years old and my family have always lived in this area Hammamat al Maleh. In past years during the hotter months we used to move to a different area, but we do not do this anymore because of the IOF restrictions. The IOF have forced us to leave before by issuing us eviction notices when they were going to train in the area, the last time was in May 2012. We were told to go nearer Tubas, through the Tayasir checkpoint, but we had no where to go over there, so instead we left all of our belongings and tents and spent one night in the mountains. The army gives us two pieces of paper, one to tell us that we have to leave for a period of time and another telling us which areas we are allowed to move too.*

*In 2011 I was herding on a Friday in an area called Ein Shoukt. The area is often used for military exercises but because it was a Friday and the soldiers were on holiday I thought I would be safe in there. I sometimes go there because there is an active water well and it is good for the animals. Whilst we were walking my brother-in-law and I saw a piece of metal on the ground that looked like it could have hurt an animal if they stepped on it. So I reached down to move it, when I touched it, it exploded in my hand and blood ran everywhere. I could see my bones through the skin. We were a four kilometre walk from the family tents, but my brother in law had a donkey with him and I rode on that until we could get help. My brother in law rang someone he knew to try and get a car to take me for treatment, and then he rang an ambulance. We got the car and went to the military base near to Maskiot because we knew they would have a first aid kit and it seemed the quickest way to get treatment. But the soldiers there didn't want to help me; it was only after I explained what happened that they decided to give me some small first aid and some bandages for the bleeding. I was eventually able to get into the ambulance and go to Nablus hospital, but it took a long time because the ambulance had been stopped at the Jordan Valley checkpoints and we had to explain my wounds.*

*I lost all of my fingers in my right hand and doing small tasks like eating and using a phone are now difficult for me. I also still feel pain in my fingers, even though my fingers are not there. The doctors tell me it will stop eventually".*

---

13) MAAN Development Centre interview with Ahmad Eid Zuhra, August 2014.



Injuries such as this are common in the Jordan Valley and particularly amongst herders due to their tendency to move around increasing the likelihood of coming into contact with such ordnances. Health care is non-existent in these communities and accessing hospitals involves traveling through checkpoints, which can result in delays to receiving treatment. Often these delays aggravate the injury and in some circumstances can result in death. Ahmad is one of many civilians who, due to IOF policies, are now permanently disabled with no options for compensation or rehabilitative aftercare.

The number of casualties from UXO and from live fire within firing zones has likewise increased over the years. Many of the firing zones now have active military training occurring regularly despite disuse for a number of years. Military training is being used as a pretext to encourage indirect forcible transfer and the IOF are increasingly using these practises to target communities and individuals. Many injuries and deaths remain unreported in the mainstream media, like that of the village of al-Aqaba that has witnessed 6 deaths from IOF live fire in recent years<sup>14</sup>.



Photo by Hamza Zhebat

14) *Ibid*



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# & D E V I C T I O N O R D E R S D E M O L I T I O N

*Sakher Abu al-Hassan of the Daragmeh family from Tayasir village*

“*The information below was obtained directly from the family, however the information that was reported by several media outlets differs greatly. There seems to be much confusion and suspicion regarding Sakhar’s death so the following is written as told.*

***Sakher’s mother, Nuha Hussien Aref Daragmeh.***

*“I had three daughters and two sons, unfortunately my oldest son who was 17 when he was killed died this June (2014). All my children help with the family’s flock but it was Sakhar who took them out to graze during the day. He left school when he was 13 so he could help with this task. His younger brother who is 16 has had to take over now and leave school as well. Sakhar was tending the sheep when he was killed by the IOF, the hospital said he had been shot at an approximate range of 400 metres. It killed him that one shot. Another herder found his body and the IOF never said anything but I think they thought he was too close to a military base. But no one was there how would we know. They (the IOF) don’t even mark the boundaries of their firing zones, they just tell you you’re in it and that you have to leave.*

*We move during the year, in the summer months we are in Tayasir and in the winter months we are in the northern Jordan Valley near al-Aqaba because it is warmer. But this house in al-Aqaba borders the northern firing zone and we have to live through constant military practises. They never clear up after they have practised, after they leave we have to go and make sure there is nothing around that could hurt another child. Once we found a large unexploded object, we had to call the security officer for the Jordan Valley to come and explode it from a distance. Sometimes they ask us to leave for half a day or a full day, and so we just go into the mountains, it is too much work to move the sheep for just half a day to Tayasir. So we just walk around. Last year they asked us to leave five times, the rest of the time they just practise around the house. There is a lot of fear and insecurity in our lives, you never know what they (the IOF) are going to do and what they will force you to do. They give us maps with areas they want us to go too when they train, the areas keep changing, we have lived in this area for 25 years and the safe areas now are much further away than when they first began to make us relocate. They don't want us here".*

”

**I**njury and loss of life is not the only physical threat to a person's security when they reside in firing zones. The extent to which a person can remain in their home and on their land is also threatened. Eviction orders and demolition orders are employed as yet another method of displacing and ultimately removing Palestinians from firing zone areas. Eviction orders refer to notices issued to residents requesting them to leave their tents for a period of time during military exercises determined by the IOF. Demolition orders refer to the notices issued to residents prior to the IOF razing housing and animal structures; demolition orders in some cases are pending for a number of years before they are carried out or dissolved.

When eviction orders are issued, the IOF issue two pieces of paper, one informing residents of the eviction order and the second a map which states the area that the family are expected to relocate too, as decided by the IOF. Families have reported that over a number of years the location to which they are expected to relocate has been getting increasingly further away from their dwelling, thus placing a difficult burden of travel on the family or community. It is very difficult to move tent structures and livestock especially if the eviction order is valid for only one night. Sometimes the IOF can issue as many as 40 eviction orders to communities who surround the firing zone in preparation for trainings<sup>15</sup> and often threaten demolition if the families fail to leave. Eviction orders are a strategic tactic for the IOF; families who receive them with regularity are more likely to feel the burden of such constant relocation, increasing their likelihood of moving permanently. Thus, the IOF is able to clear the firing zone area without resorting to demolitions and when questioned, can claim that the residents left of their own volition.

15) <http://www.irinnews.org/report/97158/opt-a-precarious-existence-in-the-jordan-valley>

The village of Tammoun, part of the Tubas governate, lies in the north of the Jordan Valley alongside a firing zone. Tammoun has been regularly subjected to IOF harassment, with night-time raids<sup>16</sup> occurring up to three times weekly. Reports suggest that soldiers arrive on foot from nearby army bases attached to the nearby settlement of Beqa'ot and the Tayasir military base following a route over the mountain. Residents feel that the raids are done to ensure there is an element of fear and insecurity amongst people and as a method of disturbing them. The village has agricultural fields with three houses on the outskirts of said fields. These houses were issued with a three night eviction order in preparation for army trainings which began on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2014; not only are the residents forced to leave during this period but they also leave in the knowledge that the IOF practise will damage the fields leaving them unusable for agriculture<sup>17</sup>. The nearby firing zone communities of Bardala and Hammamat al Maleh al Meiteh in the northern Jordan Valley also received eviction notices of several days in the October period. Bardala community has 480 cattle that herders were forced to temporarily relocate<sup>18</sup>.

Eviction practices often involve less formal methods of forcible transfer; the small village of Al-Aqaba in the northern Jordan Valley is completely situated within the firing zone with all village boundaries enclosed in the northern firing zone, near to the Tayasir checkpoint. Army training in this area is frequent and the village itself has been continually used as a practice ground. This has resulted in civilians being exposed to live ammunition practise, not being able to move freely outside of their houses and having normal routines disrupted due to army presence. In the recent years six residents have been killed and 38 injured from UXO's<sup>19</sup>. As a result, the villagers felt forced to flee the area returning intermittently when the area appears safe. It is examples like this that show how aggressive and unrelenting the policies of removal can be and how ruthless the IOF are prepared to be in placing civilians lives in danger as a method of eviction. Furthermore, these examples show how integral to the ideological agenda firing zones and military zones are.

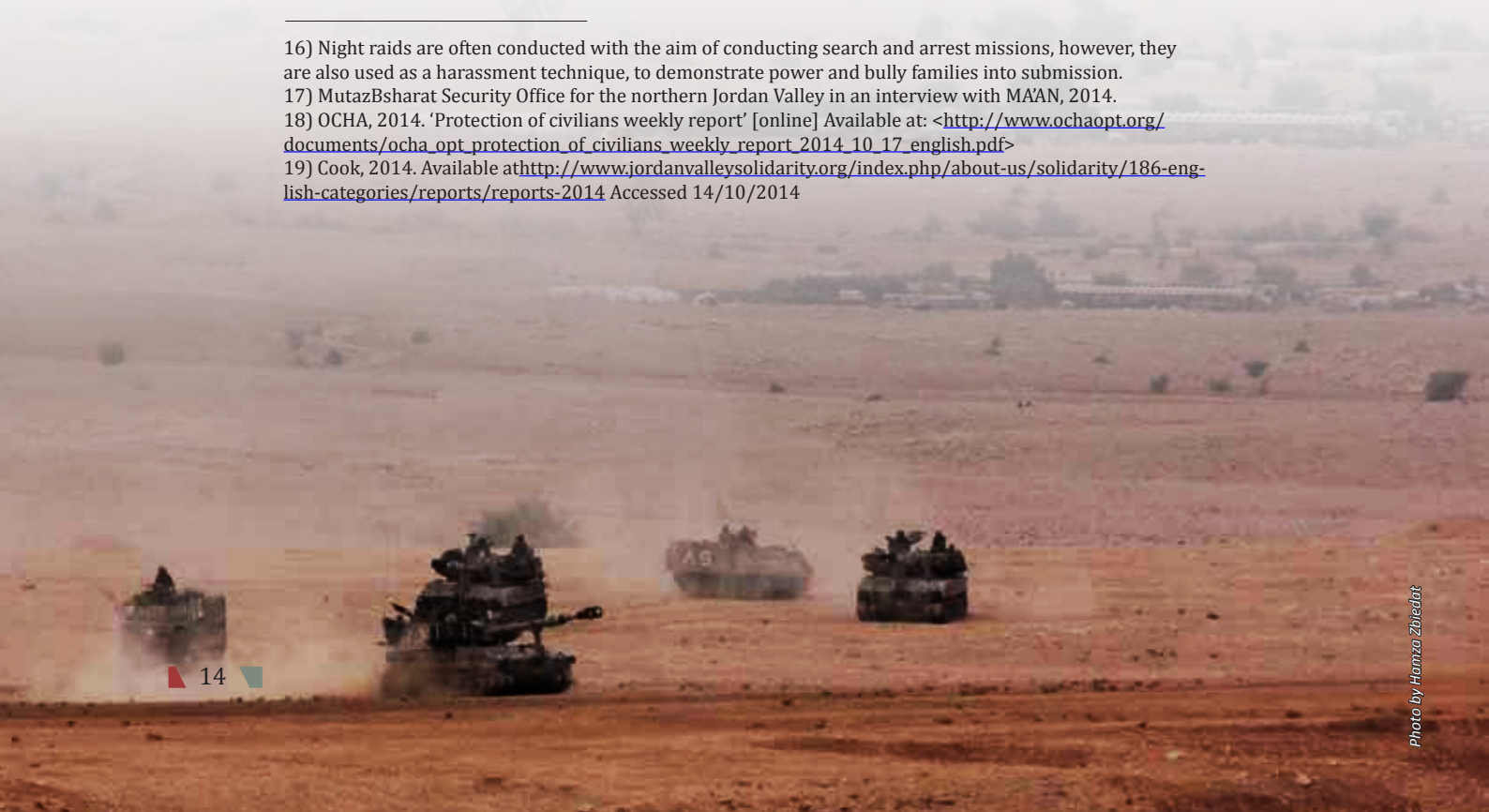
---

16) Night raids are often conducted with the aim of conducting search and arrest missions, however, they are also used as a harassment technique, to demonstrate power and bully families into submission.

17) MutazBsharat Security Office for the northern Jordan Valley in an interview with MAAN, 2014.

18) OCHA, 2014. 'Protection of civilians weekly report' [online] Available at: <[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_weekly\\_report\\_2014\\_10\\_17\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_protection_of_civilians_weekly_report_2014_10_17_english.pdf)>

19) Cook, 2014. Available at <http://www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org/index.php/about-us/solidarity/186-english-categories/reports/reports-2014> Accessed 14/10/2014





## MASS FORCED EVICTION

On the hills of East Jerusalem there are groups of Bedouins living on the periphery of “illegal” Ma’ale Adumim settlement bloc in small clustered communities. Whilst these groups had suffered with repeated demolitions from the 1970’s onwards, they had never been forced into direct transfer from the area. However, following the E1 plan announcement from the Israeli government that they wish to further extend Ma’ale Adumim, increasing the population from 36,089 to 100,000<sup>20</sup> and linking it directly to Jerusalem, these communities are now in direct threat. The only way Israel can create a link between the two areas is by forcibly transferring the 23 Bedouin villages that reside in the hills needed for construction. Such a mass population transfer is a grave breach of the Geneva Convention and would amount to a war crime. Equally, these Bedouins have no available land to relocate too given the matrix of control operating in the Jordan Valley. Instead Israel has offered a land swap system which, if accepted, would result in these communities residing next to landfill sites. This is going to leave families potentially homeless, unable to secure an income and in a worse humanitarian position than they had been previously.

## DEMOLITIONS

Those who don’t experience eviction orders receive demolition orders. These are IOF issued orders that declare a structure, cistern, building or animal pen as being illegal and forewarning of the arrival of the army with equipment to dismantle said structure. Demolition orders are most often issued when the buildings or shelters have been erected without the expressed permission of the Israeli Civil Administration, an act that Israel deems illegal under their ruling. Israel rarely grant building permits to residents of area C ensuring their development is limited, as a result residents feel forced into building structures to cope with expanding population needs regardless of not having a permit. Subsequently Israel routinely carries out demolitions on structures that were not granted

### ***Tankered water:***

*Tankered water is the most expensive system of obtaining water, especially for herding and firing zone communities who exist on an inconsistent income between seasons. Tanked water is between 20-38NIS per cubic metre, a price that increases with how far the transport truck has to travel. The extortionate cost of this water means that families and communities are living on far less water than the 100 litres per day that the World Health Organisation recommends, and are instead subsisting on 20-25 litres which is the minimal amount needed for survival during times of war.*

20) B’Tselem, 2013, ‘Settlement Statistics’. [online] Available at: <<http://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics>>

permits. The Israeli Civil Administration cites various reasons relating to location, state land and lands that are incorporated into settlement councils as the reason why permits are rarely issued. As a result Palestinians in these areas are expected to live in sub-par conditions whilst neighbouring settlements and outposts in the firing zones are allowed to flourish and expand.



The Ras al-Auja community in the central Jordan Valley and close to the Yitav military base is one of the many communities existing under pending demolition orders. Each of the structures, both residential and animal, has a demolition order attached to it. Whilst the community did succeed in securing a lawyer to ensure the order would not be carried out in the 1990's, the order has never been lifted meaning the threat remains. Equally, the army closely monitor

the building structures in the area, as recently the residents established a small mosque in a caravan and the structure immediately received a demolition order. Ras al-Auja will never be allowed to expand their community instead being forced to remain living in primitive and crowded conditions. The community here has to contend with live practise just 100 metres behind their tents, in the summer season which can occur for 5 or 6 days a week. The family have to remain vigilant about clearing the area each night to ensure that children are not harmed by the remaining metal and UXO's, and to date have managed to avoid incident.

The IOF also constantly monitor other village activities as well as development. The community is a herding one and each day the livestock are taken for grazing. IOF policies and enforcement has resulted in a constant shrinking space in which the herders are allowed to move. If an IOF imposed boundary is breached either the military or a settler comes and performs an arrest on the villager. In a direct attack on livelihoods they also often confiscate the animals. Such actions have grossly reduced the area available for herding and grazing thus reducing the quality of the land due to over grazing, in turn reducing the quality of the livestock. Examples such as this also show the increase in settler led vigilantism, actions that remain unchecked by the Israeli authorities. There are increasing cases of extreme right wing settlers entering herding communities and destroying vital structures such as wells. Israel is so keen to secure the area that they are prepared to allow citizens to commit illegal actions in the name of forcing Palestinians out of the Jordan Valley.



Demolition orders have been steadily increasing each year across the West Bank in area C and the Jordan Valley as IOF activities increase reinforcing the recent efforts aimed at moving Palestinians.

Year	Structures demolished	Number of people displaced	Number that occurred in the Jordan Valley
2009	191	319	
2010	357	478	
2011	571	1006	
2012	540	809	172 structures displacing 279 people
2013	565	805	390 structures displacing 590 people <sup>21</sup>
2014	601	1215 <sup>22</sup>	493 structures demolished displacing 969 <sup>23</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2825</b>	<b>4632</b>	<b>1055 structures demolished displacing 1838 people</b>

21) OCHA, 2014, 'Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns'.

22) OCHA, 2014, 'Forced Displacement'.

23) Note these figures are for Area C.



Statistically, there were fewer demolitions in the July, June and August months of 2014, as this coincided with the 2014 Gaza War, dubbed Operation Protective Edge, during which restrictive curfews and even more restricted movement was enforced in the West Bank. This being said, the month of October 2014 saw peaked demolitions occurring in the central Jordan Valley; not only were shelters and animal structures being destroyed but also multiple families had tractors confiscated from them by the IOF. One family in Jiftlik has nine children all of whom are now homeless<sup>24</sup>. Community members in Ein Al Hilweh – Um al Jmal Bedouin community in the northern Jordan Valley were issued with demolition orders in the month of October. The community rests within firing zone boundaries and if the demolitions are carried out approximately 80 people, half of whom are children, will be displaced<sup>25</sup>.

The 2014 demolition trend has seen the destruction of 133 structures that were provided as resources to vulnerable families as part of a humanitarian response. This equates to \$400,000 in international aid being destroyed. Not only is this a gross violation of international law, but also places serious obstacles in the way of humanitarian groups who seek to help rebuild structures. The International Red Cross's decision to withdraw from the Jordan Valley earlier in 2014 would have been regarded as a victory for the Israeli authorities who see such an action as testimony to how successful their policies are in forcing Palestinians to move.

## *DEMOLITION OF INFRASTRUCTURE*

Infrastructure development is vital as communities expand; infrastructure increases a community's resilience and improves quality of life. Israel's continued attempts to destroy Palestinian communities in firing zone areas is characterised by the prevention of infrastructure development that would benefit livelihoods and community resilience. As a result an ICHAD survey suggests that as few as 27% of Bedouin communities have access to any form of infrastructure and that firing zone communities have none<sup>26</sup>. This renders communities without electricity, water networks, waste disposal networks and sewage networks. As with the housing system, Israel ensures that individuals, organisations and the Palestinian Authority, if they wished to implement any structure in the Jordan Valley, are subjected to lengthy bureaucratic process in attempting to obtain a valid work permit, which is usually denied. Communities who have established water butt systems and cisterns to collect the rainwater for livestock watering have often had their containers removed by the IOF who claimed they were breaching firing

---

24) Palestinian News Network, 2014 'Occupation demolishes 4 homes and two barracks near the Jordan Valley'. [online] Available at: <<http://english.pnn.ps/index.php/politics/8398-occupation-demolishes-4-homes-and-two-barracks-near-the-jordan-valley>>

25) OCHA, 2014. 'Protection of civilians weekly report'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_weekly\\_report\\_2014\\_10\\_17\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_protection_of_civilians_weekly_report_2014_10_17_english.pdf)>

26) ICHAD, 2012, 'Jordan Valley Matrix of Control: 2011 Displacement Trends'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.ichad.org/sites/default/files/jordan\\_f.pdf](http://www.ichad.org/sites/default/files/jordan_f.pdf)>

zone boundaries<sup>27</sup>. All the while the neighbouring settlements have access to electricity, water and waste removal systems (which often gets dumped on Palestinian land) at a reduced cost.

Demolitions often prevent Palestinian communities from retaining their traditional ways of life. In October 2014, Palestinians living in the Yatta community of South Hebron had their 'Tabun' (oven) destroyed for the second time due to the smoke it produced during cooking. The oven had been targeted for demolition less than two months previous and the IOF had assaulted three villagers in the process. The oven made bread for between 40-50 people in the community and was a stakehold in the traditional way of life. The demolition of infrastructure such as this prevents Palestinians from being able to protect their livelihoods and traditional lifestyles. This community in Yatta is also regularly subjected to settler attacks from Karmel settlement whose safety and security is often used as a reason for implementing policies that aim to result in the indirect forcible transfer of the community. Whilst the South Hebron Hills is not part of the Jordan Valley, they too are subjected too similar IOF hostilities.

27) B'Tselem, 2013. 'Non-development of infrastructure and services in area C' [online] Available at: <[http://www.btselem.org/planning\\_and\\_building/infrastructures\\_and\\_services\\_in\\_area\\_c](http://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building/infrastructures_and_services_in_area_c)>



Photo by Hamza Zaidat

M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY







**E**very state has an obligation to protect children within its jurisdiction and, as an occupying power, Israel has a duty to protect Palestinian children. Despite this, Israel has continued to behave towards minors in the same aggressive and hostile manner that it has used towards adults. Palestinian children have been subjected to harassment, brute force, detainment, family separation, maiming and death. A clear breach of international humanitarian law, illegal under several conventions and a disturbing glimpse into the extreme actions that the military are prepared to use as a method of expelling Palestinians' off their land. International humanitarian law dictates that people living under an occupying power as civilians should be protected as thus, as laid out in the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949 which clearly decrees that civilians should not be the target of military objectives. Equally under the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, which was signed and ratified by Israel in 1990 and 1991 respectively, children have the inherent right to life and States Parties are required to take feasible action to ensure that children are given protection during conflict, both physically and psychologically. As the occupying power, Israel is bound by these treaties to protect the civilians of Palestine.

Regardless of protective clauses, the IOF fail to distinguish between adults and children and continue to regard children as an enemy of the State of Israel. Children are provided with no protection or rehabilitation when they have been affected by IOF activity. Tam-moun village, adjacent to a firing zone suffers from rises in the number of deaths and injuries as a result of UXO's. As mentioned, the village suffers from ongoing IOF night raids up to three times a week during which the IOF appear to be deliberately planting UXO's around the village. Following raids the villagers are forced to search for UXO's and call in support from authorities in Tubas in detonating devices. Despite attempting to secure the area there have been an increase in fatalities and injuries throughout the vil-lage; in the past 15 years, 18 children from Tammoun have sustained fatal injuries due to UXO explosions and 3 children have lost their lives<sup>28</sup>.

---

28) Mutaz Bsharat, 2014, Reporting Officer for the northern Jordan Valley in an interview with MAAN.

The Bsharat family reside in the village and have often engaged in the search for UXO's. They also report that the IOF enter the village on foot that makes their arrival harder to monitor.

### *Ahmad Bsharat*

*"I am 12 years old and six months ago I was injured by a UXO whilst taking the sheep out with my brother Mohammad. The IOF had been in the village the night before and they left material behind which can explode, like the other times. Whilst we were walking there was a metal object in the way and we bent to pick it up, it exploded and I remember being thrown in the air. I woke up in hospital, that's when they told me my brother had died in the explosion".*

Ahmad's brother, Mohammad Bsharat, was 16 when he and his brother were caught in an explosion caused by UXO's left by the Israeli military on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Mohammad sustained injuries to his head and his abdomen that proved to be too fatal to save and he passed away in the Turkey hospital in Tubas where both he and his younger brother were taken. Ahmad awoke in hospital after 24 hours with injuries to his leg, hand and stomach; his leg is still healing slowly and he is unable to bend or move his little finger on his right hand. Furthermore the trauma of the incident has affected him and resulted in a behavioural change. Whereas previously Ahmad was a confident child who would willingly wander around the village or complete tasks for his family outside of the house, he is now fearful of leaving the immediate vicinity of the house lest another incident occurs. He is particularly scared of tending to the sheep and his family no longer request this of him, they have also noticed he has become increasingly withdrawn from family life and is considerably quieter than before the accident. Ahmad suffers with reoccurring nightmares that prevent him from sleeping and the grief surrounding the loss of his brother has only exacerbated this. There are no systems in place that can help and support Ahmad through this period; instead the responsibility of trying to help him overcome his trauma rests with his family who hope that he will improve with time.

The UXO's are planted during the night raids and the one that caused Mohammad's death was in the centre of the village boundaries next to the police station. Following the incident there was a search for remaining UXO's conducted and several were found on top of the hill leading down to the village where herders often roam. The villagers were forced to call in reinforcement from Tubas to assist with detonating the devices.

The numbers of children who are being victimised by Israel has continued to rise throughout the occupation. The deliberate leaving of UXO's results in indiscriminate killing, an act declared illegal under international law. Acts like this need to be prevented to ensure the safety and psychological wellbeing of children in the West Bank.



“ Ahmad’s brother, Mohammad Bsharat, was 16 when he and his brother were caught in an explosion caused by UXO’s left by the Israeli military on the 11th August 2014. Mohammad sustained injuries to his head and his abdomen that proved to be too fatal to save and he passed away in the Turkey hospital in Tubas where both he and his younger brother were taken.

”



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# LIVELIHOOD REDUCTIONS

**H**erding is a traditional lifestyle in Palestine and whether nomadic or not, relies largely upon the quality and quantity of water and land available. These communities are the ones who have suffered the most under the Israeli oppression especially due to land restrictions and water scarcity. As sanctions further restrict herders' ability to live the herding lifestyle, communities are going to face so many challenges to their lifestyles that eventually people may be forced to find alternative incomes. This is yet another example of how Israel has been threatening the security of Palestinians in area C most especially in the Jordan Valley, and is another method of attempting to force Palestinians into moving off of the land leaving it available for Israeli usage.



As mentioned, those who reside in the firing zones are dependant upon herding for income. A traditional lifestyle herding requires good quality grazing land and the ability to move around the environment at ease. Since 1967, the territorial fragmentation that has been occurring has limited herders' ability to move. As settlements, firing and military zones, settler infrastructure, nature reserves and military bases are expanding; the residents of the Jordan Valley are forced to live in constricted environments. Moreover, whilst residents are denied access to 95% of the land in the Jordan Valley, 100% of graze lands that were previously used are now located within off limits areas including firing zones. Some herders take the risk and enter these areas, but if caught they are subjected to violence, arrest and fines from soldiers and settlers. The restrictions on grazing lands dramatically reduce the income a herding family can expect to make. Often the same land is used to tend sheep, which reduces the quality of the ground shrubs thus reducing the quality of the herd. In pursuit of more nourishing pastures, herders are forced to travel much further distances, again at the expense of their own safety seeing as many of the families who herd live in or on the fringes of firing zones, many of which have limited or non existent markings to depict boundaries, meaning that many Palestinians enter firing zones unawares.

If suitable grazing ground cannot be found then Palestinian herders will be forced to rely solely on fodder to feed their stock, an expensive alternative to grazing. Fodder is mass produced and so does not contain the same level of nutrients as other natural choices, moreover the cost is so high that buying fodder usually leads to or exacerbates existing debts leaving the families in an even more precarious financial situation than they previously were in. There have been many communities and families who felt forced into selling their livestock in order to pay debt and then were unable to replenish stock, eventually herding is discarded in light of another more profitable income scheme, usually involving relocating from the Jordan Valley community they had resided in.

A tactic that has been used in recent years is that of confiscating or 'arresting' livestock from herders and forcing them to pay large fines to ensure release. One of the continuous victims of this ploy is the community of Ras Al-Auja, who have been forced to pay the IOF many times to get their livestock released to them. This often involves traveling distances to the military base where the herd has been placed and then having to herd the flock the distance back. The cost of these confiscations is not just a monetary one, but also of the days in which the flock are kept in IOF bases and not given adequate access to water and fodder, thus reducing the health of the herd which will cause a reduction in the overall selling price of the animal.

M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The Palestinian environment is naturally rich in resources and has a vast array of unique ecosystems. In recent years the Palestinian environment has undergone drastic change that in part can be attributed to climate change, however Israeli practises have also accelerated the process of desertification, pollution and loss of ecosystems. Herders and farmers are most affected by changing environments as they rely on the land to provide food and water for their livestock. The combination of IOF aggressive policies throughout the Jordan Valley and the misuse of land such as firing zones and mass pollutant activity have resulted in the destruction of the natural Palestinian environment.





The local farmers in the village of Tammoun have suffered from reduced livelihoods due to IOF activity in the firing zone that has appropriated much of the village farmland. During the recent eviction period the nature of the IOF training will have grossly reduced the quality of the soil. Tanks and other armoured vehicles are heavy and thus churn the soil as they drive across it, equally the weight of the vehicle compacts the top layer of soil reducing water content and oxygen throughout the soil. This means that in order to allow the soil to rejuvenate the villages must plough the field and then leave it for approximately 40 days to allow it to regain its natural minerals. This means that villagers can only plough and sow their land during times of no IOF training. Equally for those who do take the risk and cultivate their fields run the risk of huge economic loss if the army then train again upon it. The discarding of UXO's, sharp objects and other military remnants by the IOF means that villagers must also spend periods of time clearing the land before they can plough or sow anything. A dangerous job given the explosive nature of much of the remnants left behind by the IOF<sup>29</sup>.

Over grazing in areas surrounding firing zones has resulted in mass desertification throughout the Jordan Valley. The limits upon where Palestinians are able to move and thus where they are free to graze their stock are so restrictive that herders have been forced to use the same areas of land over and over. Previously, the land would have been used on a cyclic basis allowing the land and ground shrubs to regrow during the periods of no grazing. Not only does this ensure that the livestock continuously have enough food, but it also ensures the natural protection of ecosystems and soil quality. Over grazing leads to the inability of plants and shrubbery to grow in tangent with the rate of need, this leaves the landscape barren and results in moving topsoil as the shrubs roots systems were previously responsible for holding soil in place. Equally, without any plants or plant roots the area is largely devoid of water as there is no method for retention, intensifying an already arid environment<sup>30</sup>.

Israeli practices have had a disproportionately negative effect on the Jordan Valley environment. Their heavy extraction of water, land and minerals has left the ground with limited ability to rejuvenate. For example, the mass production of agriculture continues annually, failing to allow the soil a natural fallow period in which the soil quality balances, as a result of poorer soil, settlers are over reliant on pesticides and fertilisers to ensure a good crop. These actions result in pollution due to surface water run off and natural soil movement. Equally many of the settlements in the Jordan Valley are callous in where they dump their waste, especially wastewater such as grey water, and it often gets drained onto Palestinian land that again causes mass pollution. Polluted water has been linked with failing crops and inedible production throughout the Jordan Valley.

---

29) MutazBsharat Security officer for the northern Jordan Valley in an interview with MA'AN.

30) UNISPAL, 2012. [online] Available at: <<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/9FF1F5EF997E771385257A360056BBDF>>

M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# WATER

**W**ater has been held hostage by Israel since the beginning of the occupation in 1967 when it was seen as absolutely necessary for Israel to have full control over water resources in order to support the amount of Israeli led activities such as agricultural settlements. Yet, despite such an emphasis being placed on water, Israel's destructive environmental activities have led to water scarcity and heavy pollutants in the water available in the Jordan Valley, which is largely accessed by Palestinians. The consequences of this are largely experienced by herding communities who, due to both their locations and sporadically nomadic lifestyles, live in shelters that are not connected to any water sources rendering them water scarce in an increasingly arid environment. Firing zone communities often have no access to water because the original water source has either been engulfed within the firing zone boundaries or settlers have destroyed it. Consequently, when water is unavailable residents have no option but to purchase expensive tankered water that increases in cost depending on the distance the tanker has to drive, this means residents of firing zones are forced to pay extortionate rates due to their more remote locations.



Both drinking and irrigation water have been subjected to construction residue, over extraction, pesticides, chemicals from factory work, residue metals and detergents.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the most detrimental pollutants that are present in Palestinian water are the rapid increase of salts and nitrates, both of which render water unfit for human consumption<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, the gross extraction rates

by Israel have resulted in many springs and wells that had been available for consumption, drying out completely. In 2010, the salinity levels of the water available in the West Bank reached 27.2%, which places it just under the saline water category in world standards (30-50%), placing it on par with sea water. The establishment of firing zones showed a strategic consideration of where natural water sources were located in the Jordan Valley and how to best appropriate them for Israeli usage. As a result some of the outposts that reside partially or wholly in firing zones boundaries now enjoy exclusive usage of these water sources, thus further denying Palestinian rights. Those that haven't been stolen for Israelis have instead been damaged or destroyed by the IOF, ensuring that Palestinians lives are once again made even more difficult.

Equally climate change is exacerbating the issues stemming from the lack of water available to Palestinians. Each year shows depleted rainfall in the region, which is concerning given the Jordan Valley area already had some of the lowest rainfall quantities in Palestine. The most rainfall scarce area is Jericho, dropping from 194.0 mm annually in 2003, to 147.7 mm in 2013, whilst Tulkarm/Tubas' rainfall has dropped from 770.2 mm annually in 2003 to 521.1 mm annually in 2011 (the last available data count)<sup>33</sup>. Given the dramatic decline in the 8 year period shown, it could be assumed that a further decline has been witnessed in the past 3 years. This has had a disproportionate effect on the herders who reside in the Jordan Valley and who rely on the rainfall for livestock and domestic usage. Whereas before residents of firing zones may have been able to supplement their tankered water costs with collected rainwater, this is becoming an impossibility now, combined with the demolition trend which targets water sources such as cisterns and butts. Palestinian village Al-Auja in the central Jordan Valley did not have rain for five years from 2007-2012, rendering all wells dry and leaving the community solely reliant on tanked water<sup>34</sup>. 20 years prior, Al-Auja had been a main agricultural hub, but as settlements began to develop around the village, Israeli forces closed the spring to Palestinians and over extraction caused the spring to decrease in volume, which affected the availability of groundwater for the wells<sup>35</sup>. Such actions combined with the demolition of wells in firing zone areas means that Palestinians are facing extreme water shortages which grossly reduces water availability for agriculture, daily living and development.

31) PCBS, 2010. [online] Available at: <[http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/Envirm-DayE.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Envirm-DayE.pdf)>

32) *Ibid*

33) PCBS, 2013. 'Annual Rainfall Quantity in Palestine by Year and Station Location, 2003-2013 (mm)'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_Rainbow/Documents/Meteorolgical-2013-Tab04E.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/Meteorolgical-2013-Tab04E.htm)>

34) Oxfam, 2012. 'On The Brink: Israeli settlements and their impact on Palestinians in the Jordan Valley'. [online] Available at: <[http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp160-jordan-valley-settlements-050712-en\\_1.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp160-jordan-valley-settlements-050712-en_1.pdf)>

35) *Ibid*



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# SETTLER VIOLENCE

The apartheid regime illegally implemented in the West Bank has led to a continuous cycle of violence enforced by illegal Israeli settlers against Palestinians with no accountability or justice for the victims. The combination of impunity and military protection has allowed for such a cycle. OCHA reported at the start of 2014 that in the past eight years settler attacks had quadrupled<sup>36</sup>. The result is a combined effort between the IOF and the settlers who believe they have the born right to the land, to expel Palestinians from the Jordan Valley in a continuous attempt to secure the area for the sole use of Israeli citizens through the creation of an environment so coercive that it no longer becomes possible to continue living in them.

---

36) OCHA, In the news, January 2014. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010263>>





Due to the precarious nature of their living conditions in the firing zones, many Palestinian herding communities suffer ongoing settler attacks. The high levels of evacuations and demolitions coupled with poor livelihoods leaves them vulnerable to settler attacks from which they have no protection. Even when the IOF choose to deter a settler attack against Palestinians, the crowd dispersal techniques will be aimed at the Palestinians and not at the settlers; this includes tear gas, sound grenades and rubber bullets<sup>37</sup>. Most common are attacks against Palestinians themselves or against property. Crimes are often labelled 'price tags' in which settlers are retaliating to Israeli governmental decisions that they view as negatively affecting settler life by destroying or attacking things related to Palestinian life such as uprooting trees, blocking roads and destroying wells. These attacks have resulted in the indirect forcible transfer of Palestinian populations.

There is an estimated population of 429 settlers living in ten recognised outposts that are located wholly or partially within firing zone boundaries. There are then a series of outposts that have not been formerly recognised by the Israeli government hosting even more "illegal" settlers. Many of these outposts are built on privately owned Palestinian land. The non-recognised outposts go through one of two processes, the state of Israel either seeks to legalise their presence and thus cement their future in the Jordan Valley, or in occasional cases, they are evacuated and/or demolished as a result of successful

37) <http://www.map-uk.org/news/archive/post/91-violence-and-displacement-marking-early-2014>

campaigns against them. Peace Now was responsible for the 2014 court petition that successfully resulted in an evacuation order for the settlers of the Maale Rehavam outpost, part of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc (south of Bethlehem) which had been established in 2001. However, whilst the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) was preparing for the demolitions to go ahead, the organisation also expressed concern as to how the settlers who were being evacuated would respond, citing an increase in attacks against Palestinians as a likelihood. The success of this particular case rested on an Israeli conducted survey done in 2012, which classified the lands that the outpost resided on as Palestinian privately owned<sup>38</sup>. As of yet there has not been any success in removing any Jordan Valley outposts, as Israel is in control of the majority of the land. Consequently the Jordan Valley outposts have been allowed to prosper despite being “illegally” constructed. Residents such as Omar, the man who created Omar’s farm where he and his family live, have been given full access to water and electricity and the man himself is known for his increasing violence towards Palestinians. There have been reports of him threatening herders with a gun if they come too close to his property, he has also shot at Palestinian livestock and run animals down with his truck. The Israeli authorities have never reprimanded these actions<sup>39</sup>.

The settler attacks that have been occurring this year have focused on deconstructing the final remnants of Palestinian communities; in October 2014 a Palestinian well in Khirbet Samra in the northern Jordan Valley was the focus of an attack, settlers destroyed the well cover and the walls inside so that the well became unusable and the water remaining in it was polluted with dust and rubble. Khirbet Samra sits on the edge of a northern firing zone and has the settlements of Maskiot to the north and Roi to the south<sup>40</sup>. When incidents such as these occur Palestinians have no method of seeking retribution, as police stations are located within settlements that Palestinians are not allowed to enter. In 2013 alone there were 306 settler attacks against Palestinian property such as the well incident, and 93 Palestinian casualties, with 125 property attacks and 85 attacks resulting in casualties reported by August 2014 (recorded data)<sup>41</sup>

These attacks are successful in their end goal, there are villages and communities who felt compelled to leave the areas they were residing in due to the intensity of settler violence. B’Tselem as far back as 2005 reported increasing settler attacks in the Jordan Valley as an alternative to trying to take cases to the Israeli court, which settlers perceive as being less effective in ensuring Palestinians vacate areas. The statistics show that these attacks have only increased in seriousness and in frequency with an increased attempt to secure the area for the sole use of Israelis.

---

38) Times of Israel, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2014, ‘Ma’ale Rehavam outpost buildings razed, 4 arrested’. [online] Available at: <<http://www.timesofisrael.com/maale-rehavam-outpost-buildings-demolished-4-arrested/>>

39) Interview with residents of Ras al-Auja, MAAN data September 2014.

40) Ma’an News Agency, October 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, ‘Settlers damage Palestinian wells in Jordan Valley’. [online] Available at: <<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=733373>>

41) OCHA, ‘Life, Liberty and Security’. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010057>>



“There are then a series of outposts that have not been formerly recognised by the Israeli government hosting even more “illegal” settlers.”



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

C O T H E R  
C O M M U N I T I E S  
I N A R E A C





## *South Hebron Hills and firing zone 918*

In the 1980's frenzy of land grabbing, the IOF declared a closed firing zone in the South Hebron Hills and named it firing zone 918. The zone is 30 square miles encompassing 30,000 dunams of Palestinian land. In the middle of this zone there are 12 villages classed by the name Masafer-Yatta with an approximate 1,300 residents, all of whom had been in residence pre 1967<sup>42</sup>. This collection of communities is unique because of the legal situation they have found themselves in. According to existing military law, permanent residents of firing zones can not be expelled, however the IOF have argued this claim stating that the residents are seasonal and therefore exempt from this clause. Whilst in the past the residents were seasonal in accordance with the climate, many of the residents began to make the caves in the area their permanent homes making the residents of the area permanent and therefore protected by the clause.

Despite this, in 1999 the IOF began declaring the 12 villages residents as being illegal within the firing zone and issued them with orders to leave. Attorney Shlomo Lecker and the ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel) lodged a High Court petition on

42) ACRI, 2013, 'Firing zone 918 - What's the big deal?' [online] Available at: <<http://www.acri.org.il/en/2013/03/07/918-whats-the-deal-2/>>



behalf of the villagers and the residents were granted temporary right to remain. However this has left villagers living in sub par structures with no option of building or developing whilst knowing the imminent threat of legal eviction remains an option. In addition many of the caves that families had been residing in were demolished by military forces forcing families to live in less protective shelters such as tents. In July 2013 an Israeli government statement was issued affirming the intent to push forward the villages forcible transfer in the future<sup>43</sup>. The firing zone itself had rarely been used by the IOF, who only occasionally used the area for training exercises with armoured vehicles. However in 2012 the military declared the area as necessary for training due it its unique topography in the region whilst initiating live fire practises.

The pending expulsion coupled with demolitions leaves villagers living in constant fear. Many of the villages chose not to build permanent structures for houses or for livestock, as they know the IOF will destroy them rendering it a loss of time and money for them. The village of Khirbet al-Majaz to the south east of the firing zone reported that the IOF are constantly monitoring the structures in the village<sup>44</sup>. As a result the structures that people live in are not adequate for protecting them from climatic elements leaving families at risk of illness and vulnerable to the seasons. These structures also have no access to infrastructure such as water networks. The lack of water means an increased difficulty in securing water for livestock and for themselves, most of the water used has to be collected in cisterns and water butts and is used for drinking, cooking and cleaning despite villagers knowing that it is often dirty. Some families were able to retain their caves that they or their livestock reside in, but often the livestock are kept in the cave in order to provide them with limited shelter. With the increasingly reduced rainfall, many villages are forced to buy water from tankers, an additional cost for families.

Each of these villages is reliant on livestock and herding as their main form of income, very few families are able to cultivate crops due to the water shortages. However, since they are living in a firing zone, the extent to which these villagers are able to move around for grazing is incredibly limited and the areas in which they can move are sparse due to over grazing. This has a negative effect on families' livelihoods, the surrounding environment and the extent to which younger people especially men are able to find work in their villages.

An Israeli NGO provided some of the villages, although not all, with solar panels, which has resulted in improved lives for some. They can now generate enough electricity to have lights on in their housing structures and some residents are able to use electrical aids such as butter churns to assist them in their daily lives. Those villages that don't have access to solar panels have generators that provide electricity for a few hours each day but power cuts remain a frequent issue<sup>45</sup>.

---

43) B'Tselem, 2013, 'Firing Zone 918' [online] Available at: <<http://www.btselem.org/publications/full-text/918>>

44) *Ibid*

45) *Ibid*

For the firing zone 918 communities, the nearest city is Yatta. However the city is unreachable by most cars as the road is undeveloped and only four by fours are able to crest it. As a result the journey must be undertaken on donkey or by foot, which takes a long time. Equally the route is often closed because of IOF activities meaning that villagers are often forced to turn back halfway. This city is where the secondary schools are, and those who wish their children to attend are usually forced to send their children to live in Yatta with relatives and only see them during school holidays. Yatta is also the nearest place to receive healthcare, as none of the villages have a permanent health care clinic available to them. In winter this poses difficulties for the villagers who are forced to travel the long distance in bad weather that can exacerbate their illnesses<sup>46</sup>.

Residents in firing zone 918 are categorised by living in isolation, insecurity and with the potential threat of permanent expulsion. B'Tselem carried out extensive interviews with residents from four different villages within the firing zone area and each said that they only desire was to remain on the land and feel secure in their knowledge that they could live freely. The residents stated that they had no other location that they could live in and that their lives and history were intrinsically linked to the land in which their ancestors and families had survived.

---

46) *Ibid*



M O V I N G  
N O W H E R E

# INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The recent trends shown by the IOF demonstrate that Israel has no qualms about continuing this destructive and life threatening annexation of the Jordan Valley residents and especially those living in firing zones. This raises increasing concerns regarding the future of the Palestinian citizens in these areas whose right it is to remain on their land but who may be forcibly expelled. In the interim period the following aspects of Palestinian lives are going to steadily worsen:

- The lack of available land for grazing resulting in severe and possibly irreversible environmental degradation that is exacerbated by the lack of water;





- The lack of land in which people can live securely and safely which could potentially result in mass indirect forcible transfer;
- Lack of water for livestock, human consumption and agriculture placing livelihoods and personal health at risk;
- Increased food insecurity amongst firing zone communities;
- Increased physical injury, deaths and maiming as a result from continued IOF action and trainings;
- Further land fragmentation which results in difficulties in moving around and will effectively render the West Bank as two separate areas;
- Increased IOF orders: evictions, demolitions and displacement resulting in thousands of Palestinians being homeless and needing to relocate;
- Lack of retribution and justice for injuries caused by IOF negligence or intentions, unlawful eviction and demolitions and the lack of accountability for settler violence.

The international community can be influential in the changing of this with the support of international governments, social actors and NGO's, both national and international. The Israeli agenda has been made clear and all of their actions are in contrary to international law for which the state of Israel needs to be held accountable in order to protect the future security for citizens of area C.

There are a series of conventions to which Israel can and should be held accountable which would help prevent the permanent expulsion of residents in area C and remove the firing zones, which cause multiple issues for Palestinian communities. Despite not having ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, 1997, Israel did ratify in 2000 the Convention on Certain Weapons, Amended Protocol II that had come into effect in 1996<sup>47</sup>. However, Israel issued a series of declarations and reservations on a number of articles referring to the use of land mines and explosive devices which essentially retained power of choice and control for IOF leaders as to when and how the devices. They also chose to excuse themselves from the need to record accurately the location of individual mines, instead only referring to areas known to have mines within. Most importantly, Israel issued an understanding to the convention that landmines with an attached anti-handling device are not to be considered as anti-personnel mines under the convention, despite anti-handling devices making the landmines or UXO's extremely dangerous as they will explode with any form of walking, or disturbance, thus increasing civilian casualties.<sup>48</sup> Coupled with the fact that Israel successfully exempted themselves from being held accountable or having any Israeli citizen being held accountable for land mine and UXO casualties to an international criminal court, Israel has essentially rendered itself untouchable under international law. Despite this, their actions in area

47) Amended Protocol II, 1996. [online] Available at: <[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/7607D6493EAC5819C12571DE005BA57D/\\$file/PROTOCOL+II.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/7607D6493EAC5819C12571DE005BA57D/$file/PROTOCOL+II.pdf)>

48) Israel, UNOG, 'Signature: Ratification, Acceptance, Approval, Accession, Succession.' [online] Available at: <[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/AE797B879896C6B1C1257574002DF187/\\$file/ISRAEL.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/AE797B879896C6B1C1257574002DF187/$file/ISRAEL.pdf)>

C and notably the Jordan Valley would amount to war crimes under the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court 1998, which if the Palestinian Authority decide to become a signatory could lead to investigations into the war crimes of Israel. Under which the forcible transfer of a population, genocide and the crime of apartheid are all deemed illegal.

Meanwhile Israel could be held accountable under the following:

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989<sup>49</sup>.**
  - Article 1 ‘...State parties shall respect and ensure rights set forth .... Irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s ..race..religion..political..status’
  - Article 6 ‘Every child has the inherent right to life’
  - Article 24 ‘Right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health’
  - Article 38 (1) ‘...respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child’
    - (4) ‘...obligations under humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict’
  - Article 39 ‘Appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: ...armed conflicts’
  
- **Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949<sup>50</sup>.**
  - All articles despite Israel’s argument that the convention does not apply due to the wording of Article 2 (2) which Israel suggests denotes that the convention only applies when the territory occupied fell previously under the sovereignty of another Party, which in this case would be Jordan. The International Court of Justice dismissed this claim.
  - Most importantly in relation to this topic is Article 49 which prohibits mass or individual forcible transfer of the indigenous population by the occupying power as well as prohibiting the movement of the occupying forces citizens into the occupied area.
  
- **Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 1907. ‘The Hague Regulations’ which despite Israel not being a party to, as recognised as customary law and therefore binding. These regulations coupled with the Geneva Convention form the basis of international humanitarian law that Israeli is acting in direct violation of.**

---

49) Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. OCHA. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>>

50) Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. [online] Available at: <<https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/380>>

**A**ppropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: ...armed conflicts'





# C O N C L U S I O N

The Israeli ideological agenda sought to establish control over large areas of the West Bank later classified as area C. This agenda conceptualised Israel's plans for the Jordan Valley, which included importing their own citizens whilst expelling the local Palestinian population. One of the methods employed to achieve this was the establishment of firing zones throughout the Jordan Valley and into the South Hebron Hills. These firing zones were established with no regard for the existing Palestinian communities in the area who pre-dated 1967. In order to achieve annexation of area C and most especially the Jordan Valley, Israel has consistently implemented a series of aggressive policies that favour their own illegal residents and create an environment so aggressive and hostile for Palestinians that they result in indirect or direct forcible transfer. This results in firing zone communities being the most vulnerable population in the West Bank and the most in need of humanitarian assistance. They suffer from settler violence, demolitions, reduced movement and evictions, all as a method of achieving the ultimate goal of expulsion.

Families in this situation face a unique set of humanitarian concerns all of which have a cause and effect relationship with one another. The heinous policies that Israel implement leave Palestinian communities with limited land in which to move and reside, this results in environmental degradation through the over grazing of small areas which in turn results in reduced livelihoods as the quality of the herd decreases thus bringing in less income when sold, and families are paying for fodder which wouldn't be necessary if the grazing area was wider. All of these are compounded by the lack of access to water and infrastructure, which limit the possibility of development. Israel has increased its use of live ammunition practice in firing zones which has resulted in the death of many, as well as the illegal and destructive habit of leaving behind unexploded ordnance that is responsible for even more disabilities, injuries and deaths. Equally, as Israel has strengthened their apartheid regulations on Palestinian communities, they have chosen to not hold accountable their own settler community, leaving many Palestinian communities the victims of settler violence, actions that appear to be protected with impunity.

Families and communities who reside under these conditions face bigger hardships than any other population and without drastic humanitarian assistance coupled with policy change the situation will fail to improve. These citizens are innocent civilians who are being targeted by military interventions, a clear breach of international humanitarian law and under the Rome Statue a policy that amounts to a war crime. Israel should be held directly accountable for its action against these civilians and the international complicity should be halted. Through sanctions and international intervention these actions can be halted and the process of improving living conditions and allowing traditional lifestyles to once again thrive can begin.





## MA'AN Development Center

### **Ramallah Office**

Al-Nahdah Building / Al-Nahdah St.  
Al-Masyoun, Ramallah - 5th Floor  
P.O. Box 51352 or 51793 Jerusalem  
Phone: +972 2 298-6796 / 298-6698  
Fax: +972 2 295-0755  
E-mail: [maan@maan-ctr.org](mailto:maan@maan-ctr.org)

### **Gaza Office**

Gaza City Heidar Abdel Shafi roundabout  
Moataz (2) building  
Next to Central Blood Bank Society  
P.O. Box 5165 Gaza City  
Phone: +972 8 282-3712  
Fax: +972 8 282-3712  
E-mail: [maang@maan-ctr.org](mailto:maang@maan-ctr.org)

<http://www.maan-ctr.org>



Funded by:

