

**The Occupied Syrian Golan  
Background**

**AL-MARSAD - The Arab Centre for Human Rights in the  
Occupied Syrian Golan**

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**Preface**

Israel occupied the Golan during the June 1967 war. The United Nations (UN) issued many international resolutions calling for the end of the occupation and withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied territories, including the Golan. However, Israel refuses to implement these resolutions which reiterate the illegality of the occupation, violating UN treaties and endangering international peace and security. However, the Golan have remained under Israeli occupation since over 37 years.

After the occupation, the Israeli authorities implemented policies that had been prepared by the Zionist movement previously, and which had been expressed in several letters sent by the founders of the movement to many governments and international conferences. One such letter was sent to the Higher Council of the Paris Peace Conference on February 3, 1919, relaying the possible scenarios regarding the "Jewish State" in the future, stating that: "... Mount Hermon is considered very vital to our future state. Separating this mountain from this state will render a true blow for it."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Katan Henry, The Case of Palestine, the aplastinian ministry of education 1999 p.96

## **1. Legal Changes**

Israel prepared for the annexation of the Golan by assigning military commanders and entrusting them with the “legislation” through the imposition of military orders. Hundreds of military orders were issued by the military commanders in the Golan, further solidifying the occupation and uprooting the majority of the Syrians through a sweeping eradication of cities, towns and villages which they had inhabited, erasing all traces of the Arab civilization of this region. Further, Israel, the Occupying Power, was able to control the land, water and other natural resources through the implementation of these military orders.

At the same time, the Israeli occupying authorities’ implemented annexation policies which created *fait accompli*. They built settlements, brought the Jewish settlers, and exploited all the resources of this province, all for the economic benefit of the Occupying Power.

The military administration of the Golan persisted until December 14, 1981, at which point the Israeli Knesset (parliament) passed the Golan Annexation Law. The UN condemned this law as a breach of the principles of modern international law, and demanded that Israel annul the law and adheres to the principles of international law, which regulates situations of military occupation. Further, it demanded that Israel should enforce the principle of international law in the Golan and all the Arab lands that were occupied in 1967. It also called on the international community not to recognize Israel's annexation.

As an Occupying Power, Israel is obligated to adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and must also adhere to the principles of the international human rights law in regards to the Occupied Territories, including the Golan. This position has been maintained by the UN, international human rights organisations, and international legal experts.

### **1.1 International Human Rights Law**

International human rights standards are clear that their application extends to all areas within the territory of a State Party and subject to its jurisdiction; this includes occupied territories. The fundamental principles outlined in the international human rights standards should be respected, including during times of armed conflict. As such, Israel, as an Occupying Power, should respect human rights in the Occupied Golan in accordance with such legal standards as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the two International Covenants; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This leads to the protection of the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories and asserts its respect.

### **1.2 International Humanitarian Law**

The international community has agreed upon the importance of the implementation of international humanitarian law, including the law of belligerent occupation, in regards to situations such as the Israeli occupation of Arab territory, including the Occupied Golan. As an Occupying Power, Israel should respect the principles of International Humanitarian Law and adhere to its implementation in the Occupied Golan and other areas occupied in 1967. The High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention must uphold their commitments as outlined in the conventions. This includes the obligation to ensure respect of Israel as an Occupying Power to its duties under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international humanitarian legal standards in respect to the Occupied Golan.

It should be mentioned that international humanitarian law continues to apply until such time as the occupied territory is merged within the occupying state or another country, or in the case of its annexation, on the condition that such annexation occurs as part of a political-legal settlement that is accepted and recognized by the international community. Should neither scenario take place, the principles of the law of belligerent occupation continue to apply. Therefore, the Fourth Geneva Convention remains applicable to the Occupied Syrian Golan and should be respected

therein in order to ensure the protection of its Syrian inhabitants, as long as the Israeli occupation persists on this province. The Israeli decision to annex the Golan, and the claim that this changes the legal standards applicable therein, was rejected and widely condemned by the international community, as represented by the United Nations.

## **2. The Israeli Practices and Their Effects on Civilians**

The Israeli authorities issued hundreds of military orders during the period prior to the annexation of the Golan on December 14, 1981. Such orders served to uproot the native inhabitants and prevent them from returning to their cities and villages, which were eradicated. Israeli authorities built settlements on the remains of those towns and villages, and Jewish settlers were transferred there, later controlling the land and water; marginalizing the Syrian Arabs who remained in the Golan; and making life unbearable for them at all levels.

In the aftermath of the annexation of the Golan, Israeli authorities continued to practise these same policies, but they instead claimed to be implementing Israeli law that was now applicable therein. Israel continued its settlement policies and exploited all the natural resources of the area for the benefit of the settlements and the Israeli economy. Authorities also continue to restrict the rights of the Syrian inhabitants in contravention of the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.

### **2.1 The Uprooting of the Native Inhabitants and Depopulation of Syrian Families**

According to Syrian resources, the population of the Golan was estimated to be **147,613** persons in 1966. Around 80 percent of the population was Arab, and the majority of those remaining were from other Caucasian ethnicities (e.g., Circassians, Daghestani, and Chechens). There were also 3,000 persons of Turkmen background and hundreds of Armenians.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the occupation, the area was fully populated, with around **138,000** Syrian inhabitants living there distributed on 312 residential areas, including two cities: Al-Qunaitera, located in the middle of the Golan, and FYI, located in the south of the Golan. The occupation expelled 131,000 people to inside Syria. Around 7,000 people remained in the Golan, dispersed along six villages which were located at the far north of the Golan, near the Syrian-Lebanese border. These villages were Majdal Shams, Masa'da, Bqa'atha, 'Ein Qinyeh, Al Ghajar, and Su'heita. (Su'heita was transformed into an Israeli military post after deporting its people to Masa'da; it was then eradicated completely in 1971-2.) Israeli authorities then wiped out all remains of the other cities and villages, destroying them and building settlements over their remains, controlling the land and water resources for the benefit of the settlers and the Israeli economy, through the use of military orders.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1967, Military Order No. 1 was issued, declaring that the whole of the Golan was a closed military zone, and that no one was permitted to enter or leave it, regardless of their identity. Through this order, Israeli officials sought to enforce the depopulation of the area from its native Syrian inhabitants by prohibiting Syrian citizens from returning to the area. On July 4, 1967, the Israeli military commander issued Military Order No. 13, declaring that all houses in Al-Qunaitera, which were completely emptied, were deemed closed military zones, and that no one was allowed to leave or return to them without a written permit issued by the Military Commander himself.

In order to ensure the expulsion, Military Order No. 58 was issued on September 17, 1967 to prevent the return of the Syrian inhabitants. This order sought to prevent their return to the Golan by calling for grave penalties for those who attempted to return to their homes. According to this order, the Military Commander had the authority to imprison those people who were tried to return to their places of residence for 15 years or alternatively these 'infiltrators' could be deported to Syria.

The forcible transfer and deportation of the majority of the native Syrian inhabitants from the Golan was the most dangerous action carried out by the Israeli authorities. This is a direct violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportation, of protected persons from occupied territory to the

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Abdulsalam Adel, *Jughrafiyat Suriyah Al-Iqlimiyyah*, Damascus 1981-1982, and Dr. Adeb Suleiman Bagh, *Jughrafiyat Iqlim Al Jolan*, Union of Arab Writer's Publications, Damascus 1983.

territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, regardless of their motive. An Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand, but such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement. Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased. Such transfers are also regarded as a grave breach of the Convention under Article 147. Further, Israeli authorities not only depopulated the Golan of the majority of its Syrian inhabitants, but prevented any communication between the dispersed families. Such actions violate Article 26 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which calls for the renewal of contact between the dispersed families, owing to the war, and their meeting whenever it is possible.

### **Case Study: Mr. F**

Mr. F was born in 1953 in the village of Biqa'tha. He works in agriculture. In his affidavit to Al-MARSAD, he had stated that all his family had left the Golan during the June War in order to follow his two brothers who were carrying out their military service in the Syrian Army. He was left alone with his grandmother in Biqa'tha village, as he was only 14 at that time.

Mr. F's family is made up of seven persons: his parents and five brothers who live in Damascus, four of whom have their own families. Israeli authorities have denied him the right to travel to Damascus, and therefore he had met his brothers in Amman in 1998, where they agreed to meet again during Eid Al-Ad'ha with the rest of the family. Mr. F continues his sad and bitter testimony, saying: "Unfortunately, seven days before our planned meeting, I received a phone call from my brothers informing me of the death of my mother whom I had not seen since 1967."

Mr. F describes the suffering of the Arab Syrian families who were dispersed by the Israeli authorities, saying: "This is an extremely dangerous human catastrophe, and it continues to affect the families of the Golan, which have increased in number, along the two sides of the ceasefire line, to the degree that the individuals of one family do not know each other as a result of the discontinuity created in 1967. One brother does not know his own brother. Parents have not met their children for over four decades. We can say that the catastrophe that has befallen the Golan families is similar to the catastrophe of the Korean families who were displaced during the Korean War in the 1950s of the twentieth century and had never met since then."

## **2.2 Expropriation of Land and Water Resources**

Since the beginning of the occupation, Israeli authorities have implemented policies that aim to control most of the Golan's resources, especially the land and water. The "legal" amendments, which were renewed, concerning the Golan during the military rule and after its annexation, aimed to realize the illegal policies adopted by the Israeli authorities towards the occupied Golan and its Syrian inhabitants.

### **2.2.1 Expropriation of Land Considered "Abandoned"**

Israel's declaration of the Occupied Golan as a closed military zone was supplemented by the issuance of Military Order No. 20, which deemed the private movable properties and immovable properties (real estate, money, bonds) as "abandoned property." A symbolic entity was assigned the responsibility to administer these funds and was granted the authority to use movable property, lease it through contracts, or to sell and buy it. The official in charge of the "abandoned property," which was in fact the rightful property of the Syrian government and the Syrian inhabitants who had been expelled from the Golan, placed all the land in his command under the control of Israel as the Occupying Power and the settlers. The settlers were granted the property for their possession and disposal. The actual Syrian owners, who were expelled by the Israeli authorities from the Occupied Territories, were not able to engage with the authorities in disputes concerning their properties.

Israel, as an Occupying Power, was careful to show that its actions adhered with the International Humanitarian Law through decreeing military orders. Nonetheless, its position violates the

principles and of modern international law, which forbids the occupation and annexation of another's land using force, expelling its native population, and settling in the land.

### **2.2.2 Expropriation of Land by Declaring It “Governmental” Property**

Israeli authorities sought to maintain its control over the Golan, Judaize it and settle its own population therein. On July 20, 1967, the Israeli Military Commander in the Golan issued Military Order No. 21 concerning the governmental property, placing movable and immovable properties in the Golan under the authorization of a prominent individual allied with Israel, who was then given the responsibility of administering and disposing of it. In doing so, Israeli authorities misinterpreted the provisions of International Humanitarian Law that permit an Occupying Power to administer the governmental land and properties.

This created the necessary "legal" foundation on which to distribute the property which belonged to the Syrian government and inhabitants on to the Israeli Jewish settlers. Therefore, it controlled all the resources of this part of the region, such as land, water, and forests, which were now at its disposal, in violation of the principles of International Humanitarian Law.

### **2.2.3. Controlling the Water Resources**

Soon after the occupation began, Israeli authorities started to implement several procedures aimed at gaining control over the water resources. These practices were in violation of the Regulations Annexed to the Hague Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land, which states in Article 55 that an Occupying Power may not confiscate private property in the occupied territories and that it shall only be regarded as administrator and usufructuary of the public buildings, real estate, forests, agricultural works, and water resources belonging to the hostile State, and situated in the occupied country. It must protect the capital of these properties, and administer it according to the rules of usufruct.

The Hague Regulations makes clear in Article 53 that an Occupying Power is permitted to take possession only of the cash, funds, and realizable securities which are property belonging strictly to the State, including depots of arms, means of transport, stores and supplies, and, generally, all movable property of the State which may be used for military operations. Railway plant, land telegraphs, telephones, ships (apart from cases governed by maritime law), as well as depots of arms and, generally, all kinds of war material, even though belonging to companies or to private persons, are likewise material which may serve for military operations, but they must be restored at the conclusion of peace, and indemnities paid for them.

Israeli authorities have violated these principles; the Military Commander exploited the powers entrusted to him on March 24, 1968 issued Military Order No. 120 that appoints an official who has authority over all water resources in the Golan , in order to ensure Israeli control over the water resources therein. The order stated the following: “...no person is allowed to carry out or operate any work related to water, unless by an official permit issued by the official in charge and according to the conditions set on obtaining the permit.”

After Israel obtained control over all water resources, the native Syrian inhabitants were forbidden from accessing and utilizing them for agricultural purposes. Such denial of access to these resources inflicted a blow on the agricultural foundation of the economy, changing it from a primary to a secondary source of income. While unlimited amounts of water were provided to the settlers and at a low cost, Israeli authorities provided Arab farmers in the Golan only small amounts of water apportioned for agricultural purposes, but at triple the costs. The amounts allotted to Syrian Arab farmers did not exceed 10 percent of that allocated to the Israeli Jewish settler who works in agriculture.

### **2.3 Schools and Change of Curriculum**

Immediately after the beginning of the occupation, Israeli authorities exchanged the Syrian educational curriculum prevalent in the schools of the Golan with that of the Israeli curriculum.



The new curriculum, which was forced on the Syrian inhabitants, totally disregarded the Arab identity and culture as well as the civilization and history of the local community. This disregard served as a violation of the cultural rights of the inhabitants, attempting to separate the Syrians from their ethnic and cultural roots and from their Arab tradition and heritage. It also regarded the Golan as an inseparable part of Israel.

Israel controls the administration of the schools in the Golan, where it ensures that administration staff is selected from those supporting Israel and those who are willing to use the revised school curriculum. Any interference from the students' families seeking to inspect the educational process and the level of the performance of the educational body or to interfere in the teaching methods is rejected. This permits school officials to avoid accountability and enables the continuation of violations of the principles of international human rights.

#### **2.4 Imposition of Local Councils**

In 1976, the Israeli authorities created five local councils in all the Occupied Syrian villages, imposing these changes on the Syrian inhabitants. However, the Arab Syrian inhabitants in the Golan refused to acknowledge these newly-founded councils due to their illegality. Israel assigned committees to administer these councils from its supporters, seeking to limit their accountability from any other party. Since their creation, these local councils have controlled all economic, social and cultural aspects of daily life of the inhabitants. They manage all the primary services, such as electricity, water, developmental projects, construction, and schools, in an arbitrary manner which does not conform to the civilized standards. Generally, they do not even meet the lowest standards necessary to ensure the security and welfare of the inhabitants.

Although the local councils, represented by those administering it, fail to provide most of the basic services to the inhabitants, they have ensured that tax collection from the Arab inhabitants takes place in an organized fashion and, if necessary, resort to Israeli judicial authorities to enforce them to pay. In several instances, it has been observed that the administration of the local councils have deliberately deprived many individuals or groups from basic services which it monopolizes, as a means of applying pressure on them. Those who support the occupation receive a far more privileged treatment, while other groups receive privileges as a way of extortion or silencing.

#### **2.5 Policy of Planning towards Arab Towns**

Urban planning stems from the concept of creating an infrastructure that contributes to developing living conditions for people, in order to maintain their welfare. The urban planning policy is a reflection of the authority's will to draw and set the living environment for the society under its control. Israel's planning policy towards the Arab citizens and in the Occupied Territories is biased; seeking to achieve the interests of the controlling party (the Jews) and therefore marginalizing the interests of the controlled people (the Arabs).

The Israeli authorities constrict the Syrian Arabs in the Golan. They are forbidden from doing construction work either for housing or development purposes and from establishing developmental projects. Land is confiscated by declaring it green areas or vital areas for public benefits, in order to prevent Arabs from using it for construction or other purposes.

Israeli-approved topographic maps for the Arab towns, developed in cooperation with the appointed local councils, make it clear that they are not paving the way for the service of urban development and infrastructure. Instead, they create obstacles that prevent urban development and infrastructure intended to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants. They serve the interest of Israeli policy, which is based on the principle of land confiscation and deprivation of its legal owners from using it for their personal benefit. In short, these topographic maps are used to constrict the lives of the native Syrian inhabitants through the imposition of restrictions on the urban development.

The conditions of the Arab villages in the Golan are dire, especially in regards to the level and quality of infrastructure. The Arab inhabitants are suffering from the urban constriction policy towards them and the systematic neglect in developing vital services, such as the improvement of road and sewage systems; the construction of educational, health and cultural institutions; and establishment of infrastructure for industrial areas.

The number of the inhabitants in the Golan has tripled from the beginning of the occupation to date. However, as a result of the Israeli policy of constriction and land confiscation towards local inhabitants, the remaining areas owned by the locals do not meet their increasing needs. The racist Israeli planning policies towards the Syrian population in the Golan limit their development and restrict their social and economical development. Further, they are a breach of key principles of international human rights law, in particular the rights to adequate housing, to benefit from natural resources, to development, and to an adequate standard of living.

## **2.6 Annexation of the Golan**

Israel has sought since the beginning of the occupation to annex the Golan. During the period from 1967 to 1981, Israel implemented several policies that would enable such annexation by creating all the necessary means to do so, such as allowing various Israeli governmental agencies to carry out their activities in the Golan and creating an Israeli civil court based in the village of Masa'da.

Israel developed new civil institutes and mechanisms in order to establish the annexation of the land, and began in early 1980 to forcibly impose Israeli nationality on the Arab inhabitants. The vast majority of the population refused this nationality, and were deprived of their sources of income; restricted in their freedom of movement; threatened with dismissal from work; and depriving from receiving medical, social and cultural services. Israeli forces conducted house raids, threatening whoever refused to renounce their Syrian nationality with dismissing them from their jobs; cutting off their water resources that are intended to irrigate their trees and other crops; demolishing their homes; and closing their shops.

On December 14, 1981, the Israeli Knesset ratified the third reading of the Golan Annexation Law (Golan Law, December 14, 1981), which had been presented by the government of Menachim Begin.<sup>3</sup> This law declares "... jurisdiction and administration of the state shall apply to the Golan ..; this law shall become valid on the day of its passage in the Knesset". The Israeli Minister of the Interior was given the task of implementing this law, and was allowed to authorize the necessary administrative regulations.

The UN Security Council immediately issued a resolution condemning Israel's actions as a breach of the principles of International Law; Resolution 497 of December 17, 1981 stated that, "Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the Occupied Syrian Golan is null and void, legally invalid and without international legal effect." Israel ignored the resolution and continued its implementation of the Golan Annexation Law by enforcing all its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the residents of the Golan. These laws remain in effect to this day.

### **2.6.1 Attempts to Enforce Israeli Nationality on Syrian Arabs**

On January 17, 1982, the Israeli Interior Minister began administrative procedures to impose Israeli nationality upon the Arab inhabitants of the Golan before October 1, 1982. The majority of the population opposed such measures and resisted through such means as organizing demonstrations, each persisting for three days. The population convened a mass meeting in Majdal Shams on February 9, 1982, which included residents from Majdal Shams, Masa'da, Bqa'atha, and 'Ein Qinyeh. During this meeting, they decided to send a memorandum to the Israeli authorities expressing their condemnation and denunciation of the annexation law and

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<sup>3</sup> [This legislation, extending Israeli Law to the area of the Golan Heights was adopted by the Knesset by A majority of 63 against 21.](#)

demand its annulment. They presented the government with a 15-day time limit to respond to those demands.

Israeli officials ignored the memorandum and instead carried out escalatory measures. On February 13, 1982, they arrested a number of anti-occupation political activists, putting them under administrative detention for a period of six months. The inhabitants of the four villages convened in a second mass meeting on the same night as the arrests occurred in Majdal Shams. The issue was discussed for several hours and it was decided that in response to the day's incidents, a general open strike (i.e., for an unlimited period of time) was to be announced until Israel suspended the annexation law, and stopped trying to impose Israeli nationality on the Arab inhabitants.

After the announcement of the general strike, Israel imposed a series of collective punishments against the Arab inhabitants. The four villages were declared to be a closed military zone in accordance with Article 125 of the Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945. Between March 31 and April 2, Israel imposed a curfew on the four villages, such that residents were effectively under house arrest, not even allowed to go out to their backyards or open the curtains and look outside. Thousands of soldiers were deployed in all the villages, raiding the houses and distributing Israeli identity cards to the Arabs by hand, and resorting to various methods to force them to accept them. The people rejected such methods, throwing the identity cards into the streets. After Israel finished its mission of distributing the identity cards, it left the villages on April 3, at which point the people came into the streets, collected the identity cards, burned them in the main squares of the villages, and sent some of them by post to the Israeli Knesset.

The Israeli authorities failed to break the strike due to the resistance of the Syrian Arab inhabitants. On July 20, 1982, the people announced the strike's end, having held fast for five months and six days until Israeli authorities announced that they would not impose Israeli nationality on the Golan's residents. However, despite the Israeli commitment not to impose its nationality on these inhabitants, Israeli nationality was later imposed on them. Their legal situation today is similar to that of the Palestinian Arab residents in Occupied East Jerusalem, who are granted permanent residency. However, Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem are allowed to have a Jordanian nationality as well as their Israeli travel document, while the Israeli travel documents of the residents of the Golan state that their nationality is unidentified.

### **2.6.2 Dismissal from Work During Strike**

At the beginning of the general open strike, Israeli authorities sought to use various methods to apply pressure on the Syrian Arab inhabitants to end the strike, such as denying them their sources of income. To this end, Israeli companies, especially the construction companies, dismissed those workers who were on strike from their jobs, depriving them of their rightful compensation after a decade of continuous work. The workers remained on strike, although they were denied their basic right to compensation and dismissed from their jobs, in breach of the basic principles under international human rights law.

#### **2.6.2.1 Dismissal of Teachers**

Israeli authorities also put pressure on those activists who were school teachers in their efforts to end the strike against the Golan Annexation Law. Tens of teachers were dismissed from their jobs without compensation. Those teachers who were expelled reported their cases to the Israeli labour courts. But those courts ruled in favour of the dismissal, regarding it "legitimate," and denied them of their right to receive compensation. Not only were they denied their right to compensation, but they were arbitrarily dismissed from their working places.

### **2.7 Mines & Explosives**

Since the beginning of its the occupation of the Syrian Golan, Israel has laid numerous land mines on the pretext of security. Further, it utilized vast areas of Golan land as fields for military training, leaving behind substantial amounts of military remains that threaten the lives of civilians. There are around 80 mine fields spread across the entire Golan. The Israeli military usually

neglects with maintenance of these fields, resulting in the loss of innocent civilian lives. Since the beginning of the occupation, around 20 people have been killed and over 40 wounded due to mine explosions or the detonation of abandoned equipment remains of the Israeli army. There were many children among those killed and wounded.

Israeli authorities not only laid mines in abandoned areas but also in the vicinity of military surveillance points in and around residential villages. These mines pose a real danger to the lives of the owners of those houses and their children, who are unable to freely and securely travel within the vicinity of their homes. This situation has resulted with the death of tens of men, women, and children due to the detonation of those mines. Moreover, those mines dispersed within the vicinity of these residential houses create a dangerous threat to the inhabitants, especially during winter time, when the soil caves in, therefore shifting the mines so that they collide with the houses and even go into them. This situation necessitates the immediate evacuation of the residents.

## **2.8 Settlement in the Golan**

Soon after the beginning of the occupation, Israeli authorities began the settlement projects, whereby some groups began moving into the area. Successive Israeli governments have all created plans and projects for settlements, the most prominent being the agricultural planning of the Golan, as agriculture is regarded as the basic foundation to the first stages of settlement and a simple means to control land and water resources.

Israeli sources indicate that on June 14, 1967, General David Ben Eliezar (Military Commander of the Northern Area) allowed a group of kibbutzim to spread from the Galilee, encroach towards the Golan and settle in the Al-'Uleiqah camp, located in the middle of the Golan, after the Syrian Army abandoned it during the war. Members of this group, numbering around 50 people, moved to Al-Qunaitera, whose original inhabitants were forced to leave, on August 31, 1967. They established a restaurant, an information centre, and a medical clinic, and began receiving newcomers from Israel and organizing tours in the rest of the area in order to get to know the region, in particular those locations that would be the site of future settlements.

There are presently 33 settlements spread across the Golan. Their population reaches around 18,000, including the settlement of Katsrin, host to around 5,000 people. These settlements are primarily focused on agriculture, industry, and tourism. Additionally, there are two industrial areas in the settlements of Qatzrin and Bnei Yehuda.

Israel began confiscating the water resources early on and placing them under the control of Israel's national water company. Most of the water resources are concentrated in the northern Golan, where the villages whose occupants remained are located. The confiscation of these resources resulted in the shifting of its course towards the southern Golan, where the vast plateaus, which were handed to the settlers after its original inhabitants were expelled from them, were located. The best individual example of that is the confiscation of the natural Ram Pool, located between Majdal Shams and Mas'ada, which holds around 13 million cubic meters of water. It was placed under the control of the settlers, hence depriving the inhabitants of the Arab villages within its vicinity from benefiting from it.

## **2.9 Usage of Land in the Golan before the Occupation**

Prior to the 1967 War, the Golan's economy was mainly based on agriculture and raising livestock; over 62 percent of the labour force worked in this sector. The industrial sector accounted for only 20 percent of the work force. Arable lands were estimated to be around 107,150 hectares in 1966, of which 36,352 hectares were cultivated. Pastures made up another 17,500 hectares. All the land, including the pastures, depended on heavy rains for un-irrigated farming during both summer and winter, and to develop an abundance of grass for pasture, as well as the small areas that depend on irrigation during the summer from surface water sources, such as natural pools and local water springs.

The most important agricultural crop on which the Golan inhabitants relied was wheat; the average yearly production of wheat was around 180,000 tons, followed by approximately 140,000 tons of barley. The second most important agricultural activity was the cultivation of fruit trees (including olive, fig, and pomegranate trees) and grapevines. Around 4,310 hectares were cultivated with fruit trees in the Golan in 1966, spreading across the mid-northern area of the Golan.

In addition to these, the region produced 6,000 tons of irrigation-dependent yellow corn and grew other types of grain to feed the animals. Similarly, growing vegetables depended on irrigation; this sort of agriculture was widespread in the southern Golan, especially in the warm areas. After the 1967 occupation, the estimated area of land available for vegetable cultivation was around 5,000 hectares. Cotton was also successfully cultivated in the Golan: in 1962, the region yielded approximately 26 tons of this crop. Sesame was successfully grown, and beans were cultivated in the area of Banias, as were other crops like flax and anise.

In addition, the inhabitants of the Golan raised livestock - in particular sheep, cows, goats and horses - due to the abundance of pastures and grasslands. Breeding poultry and raising other birds became prosperous in the Golan, as was breeding bees and the production of honey.

Industry was a minor sector, with only 5,000 workers from the labour force working in this field in 1967. This included craftsmen, manufacturers, construction workers and transportation workers. Most of those working in industrial jobs were concentrated around Al-Qunaitera, working in crafts such as smithery, carpentry, and the manufacturing and repair of agricultural tools, or hand-woven crafts, such as weaving carpets, tents, tanning leather or making ropes. Al-Qunaitera prospered as a relatively important centre of trade prior to the occupation. This prosperity did not last for long; after the war, the Israeli Army eradicated and depopulated the largest parts of the Golan, especially the city of Al-Qunaitera, whose houses were emptied of their belongings by the Israeli forces and sold in Israel, before they demolished most of the buildings and burned most of the land.

## **2.10 The Economic Policies of the Occupying Powers Against the Arabs**

The Israeli policy in regards to the Golan sought to isolate the areas with Syrian inhabitants from the rest of the nation, contrary to what was done in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This policy negatively impacted the daily life of the people; their centres of life were turned to a demolished and vacant area. This fractured the socio-economical relationships of the Arab Syrians. Israeli authorities then attempted to recreate these relationships in accordance with its policies and interests. The policy of closure and isolation facilitated this situation, as it forced the inhabitants to form economic and trade relationships with the Israeli market and since all workers had lost their jobs as a result of the occupation.

The quick merging of the Golan economic activities with those of Israel was a key priority of the Israeli authorities in their effort to merge the native inhabitants within the Israeli society, transforming them into a cheap labour force for the Israeli market.

Israeli authorities have imposed a policy of land confiscation and use to the benefit of settlements or for military/security reasons. Many of the Arab residents have lost more than half of their agricultural property which was the foundation of their economy. Land used for pasture was also confiscated, thus preventing animals from accessing it and thereby forcing the owners to stop raising livestock, another key element of the Arab economy. As a result, Israel brought to a halt the vital components of the economy on which hundreds of families in the Golan depended. Vast areas of pastures and agricultural lands were confiscated and transformed into military zones and minefields, denying their owners access to their own land.

This had a severe impact on the residents and their living conditions. Agricultural production of dairy products and field crops was badly affected and disappeared altogether. Once this

happened, the Arab society became dependent on Israeli agricultural products and partially on the products of the settlements (especially in the field of dairy products).

The cultivation of fruit trees remained, although it too was impacted by the occupation, since the Israeli authorities had transformed part of the land to minefields and military routes. Cultivating fruit trees became a good source of income, especially apple trees, and the inhabitants of the Golan have continued to do so, resisting Israeli products until this day. These thrived in the field due to the suitable climate and nearby natural water springs which the Israeli authorities had not been able to confiscate. Several artesian wells had been dug alongside these springs by the Israeli Authorities and the settlers, reducing its amplitude. The good working spirit of the farmers was also an important contributor to their success in this area, as they constantly sensed the danger of losing their lands.

The cultivation of apples is not only a key source of income, it increases the relationship between the farmer and the land and stands in the way of it being confiscated, since it is rooted with trees. In response to Israel's siege and land confiscation policies, the inhabitants transformed the largest part of their un-irrigated land to cultivated land and planted it with fruit trees by investing substantial amounts of money in it. This was not very profitable from a pure economic perspective, and it was rather costly for the residents. However, it was the only possible way to maintain the land. Unfortunately, the cultivation of fruit trees requires water for irrigation, and Israeli authorities tried to deprive the farmers of the necessary water by confiscating most of the surface and ground water resources.

The settlers later created artificial water basins in the middle and southern areas of the Golan, which made the Mekorot Water Company, allot small amounts of lake water to irrigate limited areas of nearby land owned by Arabs. Such allotments did not exceed 10 percent of the irrigation needs and they were very costly, aiming to force people to abandon the agricultural activities which were part of their act of resistance and perseverance.

### **2.10.1 The Economical Activities of the Settlers**

There is unquestionably an economic goal of the Israeli settlement in the Golan. Immediately following its occupation, Israeli authorities began formalizing ratifying their control over the land, establishing projects and wide scale studies on the methods to economically exploit the rich and diverse land which they had stolen. The policy of settlement planning took into consideration this diversity, as has been reflected in the way agricultural, industry and tourism facilities were distributed. For example, apart from its military value, the northern Golan has been used for tourism: one of the most important tourist sites is the ski resort on Mount Hermon, which attracts tourists during the winter and summer. Large areas of land were confiscated from the inhabitants of Majdal Shams in order to establish this site.

Due to the cold climate that prevails in northern Golan and its abundant waters, Israel has erected agrarian settlements that depend on growing fruit trees which accommodate the climate, such as apple, almond and cherry trees. Moreover, they relied on industrial agriculture and built workshops specialized in squeezing and dehydrating part of the produce.

As for the southern Golan, with its warm climate and high temperatures, the settlements have focused on growing vegetables or tropical fruits like mango, avocado, and bananas, in addition to growing grains and cotton in the southern plains of the Golan. The variety of agricultural crops produced throughout the year has made the Golan economically substantial. Additionally, vast areas are used as natural pastures owing to the provision of plants and grass which are a good source of inexpensive fodder for the cattle due to abundance of water and heavy rains throughout the year. Animal breeding is an important sector for Israel, as it provides it with abundant amounts of high quality milk and fresh meat, in addition to bee breeding, honey production and fish breeding in artificial basins. Clearly, agricultural and animal products in the Golan strengthen the Israeli economy. Further, factories have been built to bottle the large amounts of natural mineral water and distribute it widely in the market.

The industrial sector has its important share too - dozens of factories and specialized workshops for various products have been established in the Golan. For example, there are factories for electronic and electrical appliances, heating systems and other manufactured items that are produced and exported abroad.

There is also the developed wine industry, owing to the success of cultivating appropriate grapes in the Golan. The wines from the Golan are exported to European countries, North America, and Australia, and are regarded as among Israel's best wines.

Tourism in the southern Golan is a big component of Israel's plan for the area, because the Golan is an area rich with historical sites and beautiful landscapes of valleys and waterfalls. It also has an area famous for its natural spas, attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists yearly from Israel and around the world.

The settlements in the Golan produce the following main products: wine (which meets 21 percent of the needs of the local Israeli market and forms 38 percent of Israeli wine exports), beef (which meets 40 percent of the needs of the local Israeli market), apples (30 percent of the Israeli market), cherries (50 percent of the Israeli market), and bottled mineral waters (Eden Water) that cover (50 percent of the Israeli market).

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