



MA'AN Development Center

The Consequences of
'Price Tag' Violence and Settler Impunity
on Palestinians.



2016



Introduction



Since attaining the status of an occupying power in 1967, Israel has continuously sought new techniques to undermine the realization of the Palestinian right to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial contiguity in an attempt to prevent the viability of a Palestinian state. The building of settlement blocs began as a means for Israel to begin the transfer of population thus ensuring they had population control on the ground in the area they class as Judea and Samaria. This area is the land categorised as area C under the Oslo Accords 1993-1995, a means of categorising land during the Oslo era that was supposed to only exist for a five-year interim period before returning all control to the Palestinian National Authority. However, this failed to occur and Israel retained control over this significant 61% area of the West Bank, the majority of which is the Jordan Valley. To date there are 137 settlements in the West Bank that the Israeli government recognises and 'legal' hosting an estimated population of 531,000 settlers. Additionally, there are 5,000 residing in the 100 outposts built without direct Israeli government authorisation despite receiving benefits and support. Of the 137 illegal settlements 39 of them are located in the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley area equals 28.8% of the West Bank and 88% of it has been categorised as area C making it impossible for Palestinians to retain any sovereignty over it. Subsequently, a settler population of over 10,000 retains control of 95% of the area leaving the Palestinian population

of nearly 60,000 to reside and work in the remaining fragmented 5% of land with limited resources and accessibility. Such an unequal balance of power leaves Palestinians incredibly vulnerable to increasingly violent and frequent attacks by Israelis.

The very concept of a settlement, settling a group of people outside one territory and within another, establishes from the outset a mentality that has been bred within these small communities. Israel made it very clear early in the process of building settlements that they were to act as Israel's frontier in the West Bank. As a result settlements began to attract certain mind-sets leading to the distinct categorisation of settlers into three groups; religious nationalists, economic settlers and ultra orthodox. Coupled with this, are the extremist outpost groups who have chosen to distance themselves from the more conventional settler communities under the guise of attempting to redefine Zionism and take control of the land. These groups are referred to as the hilltops movement and consist of second or third generation settlers who take their beliefs one step further in trying to reclaim land they see as legitimately theirs.

Formal settlements are recognised as being legal under Israeli law (despite their illegality under international law) whereas outposts are deemed illegal under Israeli law despite some receiving state benefits and support. Subsequently, some of the outposts that get established are dismantled by the IOF, one of the many reasons that settler violence has increased. Settler violence has been on the rise for a number of years; with OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) releasing data at the start of 2014 that suggested the number of attacks had quadrupled¹ in recent years with many of the attacks being targeted at vulnerable populations². Furthermore, with the fight for land intensifying every year and tensions rising these attacks are only set to increase in violence and frequency.

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

2) "Attacks" for the purpose of this publication include all actions perpetrated against Palestinians initiated by Israelis.



Illegality of settlements



Despite Israel's profusion that they are exempt from the Fourth Geneva Convention Article 49(6) that stipulates the illegality of an occupying power transferring its own population into the lands of the occupied territory, settlements in the West Bank are widely recognised as being illegal and in direct contravention to International Humanitarian Law. Israel does in fact dispute this, claiming such a clause would apply only to forcible transfer, and their citizens are freely relocating themselves to West Bank settlements. However the Geneva Convention is primarily concerned with the protection of the nationals of the occupied territory and not with the relations between the occupier and their own nationals. Thus the convention does not require the transfer of a population to be 'forcible' demonstrated by the word being deliberately left out of the clause, for the transfer of a population to be illegal.

Despite Israel's assurances that settler influx into the West Bank has been incredibly slow, citing just 60 persons on average every year, settler movement has actually shown steady growth over the last 20 years. Made all the more possible by the various incentives that each Israeli government has offered to those who are willing to move there, including, subsidised bills, low re-payment loans for agricultural business and land agreements. Under no government has there been zero movement or an unprecedented mass movement, suggesting that no political party has been the main driver behind settlement dwellers, they are simply the policy of Israel.



Legal impunity

The rise in settler attacks has been drastic in recent years as examined below, however, what is more disturbing is the rise in apparently premeditated settler attacks as opposed to the previously opportunistic nature of them, with no system in place to ensure control, punishment or retribution.

The relentless pursuit of control over the West Bank has resulted in extensive settlement expansion and with that an influx of settlers. Thus the unequal balance of power and the prevention of Palestinian growth has left the Jordan Valley residents vulnerable to Israel, marginalised in their access to basic rights and isolated from the rest of the West Bank. As a result these communities have no protection from settler and IOF activities including violent attacks against the person, against infrastructure and against livelihoods. Area C is under full Israeli military law, which by default means that settlers should also be

held accountable to military law, however, instead Israel allows settlers to remain under Israeli civil law exactly the same as those in Israel proper. This leaves the Jordan Valley fragmented in the implementation of its legal system; providing settlers with liberties they should not be able to access. This leaves two different populations in the same geographical area governed by non-complimenting legal systems, which violates the principle of equality where all people within the same territory under the same ruling system should be ruled by the same law³. Although this is problematic when combined with the current categorization system leaving the Palestinian territory fragmented and zoned. Moreover, this provides settlers with a certain level of impunity when committing illegal acts of violence against Palestinians since the

3) The Emergency Regulations (Offences in the Occupied Territories – Jurisdiction and Legal Assistance) 5727-1967 enforced by the Minister of Defense in July 1967 provided that Israeli citizens who commit offenses in the Occupied Territories can also be tried in Israeli courts. This provision created extra-territorial personal status for Israeli civilians in the Occupied Territories that have since been extended by the Knesset.

Palestinian National Authority is unable to provide any forms of protection.

This impunity is evident in the lack of criminal accountability for the attacks against Palestinians. Settlers have become ruthless in their persecution of the Palestinian population, indiscriminately targeting children, mothers, elderly and communities who have no means of resisting attacks. Equally the targeted Palestinians have no methods of exacting retribution as the Israeli police rarely search for offenders and close files with inconclusive evidence due to their failure to collect it. The Nationalistic Crimes Unit established in the Samaria and Judea District Police (Israeli police located in the West Bank) is the group responsible for initially investigating claims filed by Palestinians. Firstly, accessing this unit is difficult for Palestinians, who often have to have the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din file on their behalf. Secondly, internal racism and discrimination against Palestinians is evident in the way in which files are investigated. Yesh Din released a report in 2014 concerning their following of 1,045 case files lodged with the Samaria and Judea District Police (Jordan Valley) that cited police failure in 85.2% of cases leading to the closure of files with no outcome for the Palestinian victims. Over the past nine years only 7.4% of investigations into crimes against Palestinians by settlers have resulted in indictments, two of which were issued between 2013 and 2014, a period of time during which attacks were becoming more frequent and violent. This suggests the rate of police failings in investigating attacks against Palestinians is actually worsening amongst a growing trend of unprofessionalism, negligence and failure to attain investigative standards. In 2013 the welfare minister Meir Cohen, was quoted

as saying that control had been lost over settlers in a number of cases and they had to be dealt with punitively in order to bring them back to normal behaviour. However, no move to punish such behaviours has been made, while attacks have only increased throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 2013⁴.

The table below shows the statistical breakdown based on the Israeli attacks listed within the 1,045 Israeli police files:

47.4%	Israeli damage to Palestinian property including agriculture and vehicles
34%	Violence against Palestinians
13.6%	Theft of Palestinian land
4.5%	Killing of animals, desecration of religious markers, dumping of wastewater on Palestinian land and of the dumping of solid waste on Palestinian land.

The heavy presence of the IOF in the Jordan Valley also serves as an additional protection level for settlers and an additional threat to Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority minister for the fence and settlements, Maher Ghnaim reported that anti-Palestinian settler attacks often occurred in conjunction with IOF assaults, implying coordination between the two groups. Additionally, there have been claims levied at the IOF suggesting they provide escape routes from situations for settlers, protecting them from being caught or facing any repercussions from the Palestinian side. It is true that the IOF report using crowd dispersal techniques and rubber bullets against Palestinians during settler attacks, thus attempting to end the conflict, but by punishing the innocent⁵. This also suggests reluctance on the IOF's behalf to place any sort of blame on settler groups, thus increasing their impunity from the law.

4) <http://www.timesofisrael.com/series-of-price-tag-incident-in-jerusalem-jordan-valley/>

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



Price Tagging

A recent trend has seen the targeting of third-party Palestinian civilians in political attacks dubbed ‘price tagging’ through which settlers are retaliating against the government or IOF for making decisions they see as undermining their claim to the land or anti-settlement establishment through the direct targeting of Palestinians in heinous and lethal attacks. The past 6 months have seen further deterioration in relations with settlers torching Palestinian houses with occupants inside during the night, engaging in hit and runs on children and spraying slogans on Arab property that calls for “Death to Arabs”. Disturbingly, Israeli authorities have not heeded these crimes, and as mentioned above Palestinians are the ones who are targeted when the IOF intervenes, in effect creating a case of secondary victimisation. The number of price tagging attacks that occur yearly is disputed due to the lack of media reporting on the topic and the lack of legal accountability. In addition many outlets simply do not differentiate between price tag attacks and settler attacks. There has been a disparity in reporting throughout the years, OCHA reported 399 settler attacks in 2013 and 329 in 2014 suggesting a reduction of 8 attacks weekly to 6 attacks weekly. However, the reports seem at odds with the levels of violence being reported in local news outlets. Especially as in August 2014 alone there were 55 settler attacks reported that led to injury and 89 attacks

that led to property damage⁶. Moreover OCHA is reporting that settler incidents resulting in injury or damage to property between January and the first week of November 2015 are only 207⁷. This figure is completely at odds with others given the violent nature of increasing attacks this year especially throughout the olive season in October. Some media outlets reported 130 settler attacks in a single week⁸ showing the incredible disparity between sources. This could be due to reporting mechanisms and their reliability and it could be to do with reporting between Palestinian and international organisations that is causing counting differences. However the conclusive point remains that the majority vastly under estimate settler attacks and price tag attacks are increasingly becoming the normality for many.

Despite the recent increase in attacks labelled as price tagging incidents, the beginnings of price tagging can be traced back to the disengagement of Gaza settlers in 2005. The 2005 move made by the Israeli government was seen as directly undermining the presence of Israelis within Palestinian land. Price tagging became a method of direct retaliation against the government. The attacks sought to establish a spectrum of terror against Palestinians from Israeli citizens to demonstrate where the power lay.

In a vague attempt at recognising the severity of these attacks the Israeli government established a special task

6) http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_10_02_english.pdf

7) <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc27october-2november-2015.aspx>

8) <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/settler-palestinians-october>

force unit charged with investigating and preventing price tag attacks. Equally, the terminology being used by the government is that which is usually reserved for Palestinian assailants. Typically the term 'illegal associations' has been associated with Palestinian groups, yet this term is now being used to label groups who engage in price tagging attacks. Theoretically, this should serve to increase law enforcement in two different ways; first, declaring a group as illegal should ensure they are accountable to criminal charges; secondly, if a group is believed to be engaging in illegal activities their civil rights can be severely curtailed including the denial of legal counsel during investigation and interrogation under Shin Bet's ruling. However, measures like this are rarely and only in extreme circumstances used against Israeli citizens, instead they are most often used against Palestinian prisoners or detainees. Equally whilst there have been sporadic arrests of Israeli settlers for attacks they usually result in the settlers being released on limited evidence claims, actual conviction is rare.

However, there is juxtaposition here in that whilst there has been a basic move to incorporate price tagging into criminal listings, the Knesset voted against designating the action of price tagging as a terrorist offence. Which undoubtedly, if the same action were committed by a Palestinian against an Israeli it would be classed as a terrorist offence. The unsuccessfulness of the vote to incorporate price tag attacks into Israeli policy suggests that whilst they will outwardly respond to pressure placed on them to react adequately to the attacks, they still take attacks against Palestinian citizens as far less serious than those committed against Israelis. Whilst Palestinians are subjected to trails without due process and harsh punishments, 85.2% of attacks against Palestinians are closed due to police failure to secure convictions through fair investigations.



Examples of attacks in recent months:

Date	Act	Legal penalty
22 nd March 2015	A 6 year old child is hurt after settlers stoned her repeatedly, she was taken to hospital with cuts and bruises on her head.	None
23 th October 2015	A Rabbi from Rabbis for Human Rights was supporting Palestinian farmers during the olive season was attacked by an Israeli extremist. Demonstrating the extent to which settlers are prepared to go ¹ .	None
26 th October 2015	Palestinian farmers were attacked by Israeli settlers whilst trying to harvest olives who threw rocks at them ² .	None
27 th October 2015	23 year old Homan Adnan Sa'id was fatally shot after the IOF claimed he had a knife which eyewitnesses later denied ³ .	None

Price tagging is a retaliation method for Israeli settlers, but retaliation for government or IOF actions that Palestinians have no control over. Thus many Palestinians fear for their safety when a legal or political decision is made because attacks are notoriously difficult to predict. The organisation Peace Now attempted to map some of the more recent incidents that led to a rise in price tagging attacks, in 2014 the vast majority of incidents occurred during and after the events surrounding the kidnapping of the three Israeli teens followed by a brutal and unprecedented IOF incursion into the West Bank and concluding with the slaughtering of the two men responsible without access to legal counsel or trial. In 2015 attacks increased as tension

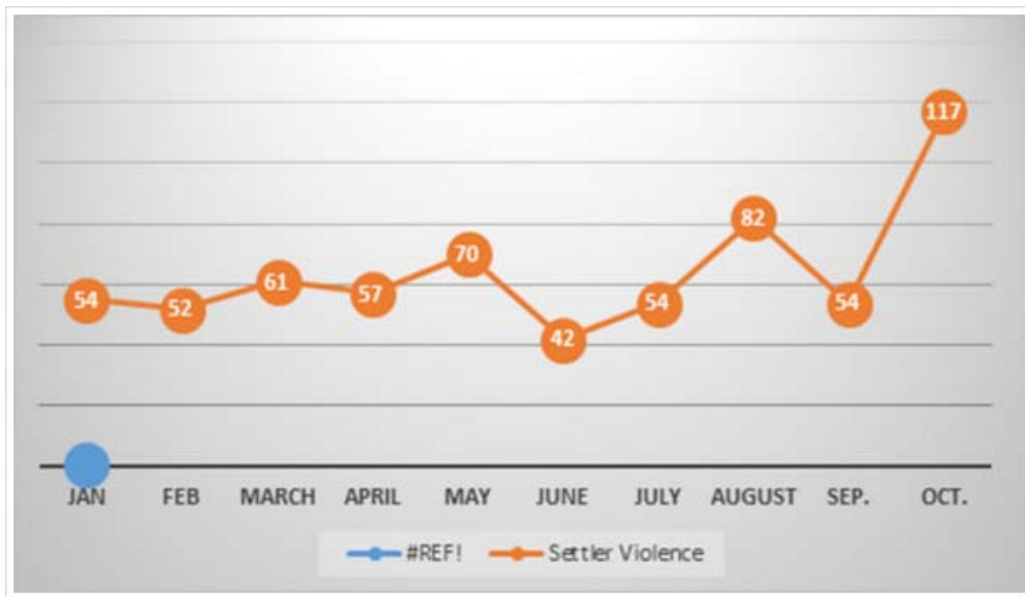
9) <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/10/23/israeli-settler-attacks-rabbi-protecting-palestinian-farmers>.

10) <https://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=768481>

11) <http://english.pnn.ps/2015/11/04/october-74-palestinians-killed-2355-injured/>

increased throughout East Jerusalem amidst settlement expansion and a wave of violence between Palestinians and Israelis. As can be shown by the increase in attacks corresponding through the months with attacks against Israelis. The graph below was created by the PLO negotiations department and maps the increase in settler violence throughout the months of 2015, however even this seems unrepresentative of the reality and fails to differentiate between price tagging events and settler attacks¹². The spike shown from July onwards represents the increase in attacks following the arson on the family in Duma Village Nablus and the retaliation incident in which two settler were shot dead at a junction between Itamar and Elon settlement. October represents the increase of tension throughout West Bank and East Jerusalem.

12) <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/settler-palestinians-october>



Price tagging attacks are also distinct from 'normal' settler attacks because they aren't necessarily limited to targeting Palestinians, for example earlier in 2015 an American consulate convoy was also targeted during attacks. This attack suggests the settlers are willing to target anyone they see as working against them and undermining their claim to the land and their self perceived right to be there. This being said, such attacks are uncommon and Palestinians remain the main target. The nature of price tagging is to create a hostile environment against anything seen as pro-Palestinian and somehow undermining the claim of Israelis to the land. In addition price tagging is not discriminatory to Muslims, many attacks have been directed against Christian places of worship as well as Muslim, demonstrating the focus of the acts is to target anyone seen anti-Israeli/settler.



At the time of publication violence had increased so much between Palestinians, the IOF and settlers that in the month of October alone 77 Palestinians were killed, 2,355 injured and 5,000 were suffering from related issues such as tear gas inhalation. These attacks came from both the IOF and settlers with no repercussion for them within the Israeli justice system.



West Bank

Settler Activity

The vast number of settlers residing illegally in the West Bank has reached an estimated 531,000¹³ or more excluding outpost populations. The number of settlements that have infiltrated into area B and are edging towards area A have also increased, placing many settlers within extremely close proximity to West Bank residents. This proximity has resulted in a rise in settler attacks against populations throughout the West Bank. On the whole the attacks are not concentrated within one area, instead simply being aimed at local villages or towns that the settlers have access to. The previous year, 2014, saw a number of increasingly heinous crimes being committed across the West Bank including the torching of houses. In 2015, Khirbet Abu Falah, a village northeast of Ramallah, was one of the villages to experience such hate crimes with a house being set on fire whilst a widow and her three daughters were inside in late November. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated crime and could have amounted to murder, yet Israeli officials still refuse to act against settlers. Slogans written in Hebrew wishing 'Death to Arabs' and 'Vengeance' were also found throughout the village, currently not an unusual sight in West Bank villages. This particular incident was classed as a price tagging attack due to the increasing violence occurring in East Jerusalem and the ongoing tit-for-tat attitude that was between Palestinians and Israelis¹⁴ at the time of the attack.

13) <http://www.btselem.org/settlements>

14) <http://www.maannews.com/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?id=741899>

There has also been a rise in what could be considered vigilante attacks by lone settlers on Palestinians, for example the spate of hit and runs that occurred last year and this year in which settlers were deliberately targeting Palestinians. A number of Palestinian pedestrians became settler targets in 2014, the most poignant of which was the targeting of two Palestinian children, both aged 5 near Beit Jala in Bethlehem which resulted in the death of one of the girls. Through the years settler initiated car attacks have resulted in high Palestinian loss of life and disability. These have only increased throughout 2015. The Israeli government provides no form of compensation or disability allowance to victims of Israeli actions; state, IOF or settler. Despite it being an automatic legal provision for Israeli citizens of car accidents to receive ongoing compensation for any physical or psychological trauma they may have experienced. Equally, whilst hitting someone in a car is illegal under Israeli law and punishable by incarceration, as usual settlers are exempt from Israeli law in the West Bank, instead continuing the trend of impunity that they are able to operate under. Such actions again show Israel's failure to make themselves accountable as an occupying power to the citizens of the territory over which they reside. It also highlights the reality of implementing several jurisdictions within territory and refusing to hold all accountable.

Settler attacks against schools and children

There are 38 primary and secondary schools in the Jordan Valley providing education to approximately 13,000 students. They are predominantly located in area C which means that many of them already suffer from lack of infrastructure, a lack of health and safety regulations and due to geographical locations many students are forced to travel long distances to school¹⁵. Children are amongst some of the most vulnerable in any population and in Palestine, they have been continuously victimised by the Israeli occupation forces who operate under indiscriminate targeting. Due to their location, schools in area C face the highest level of targeted violence from settlers and the IOF. Children are often assaulted by settlers, verbally abused, have stones thrown at them and are sometimes forced to evacuate schools when settlers begin to infiltrate the premises and attack the schools themselves. Nablus, the Jordan Valley, Hebron, Bethlehem and Ramallah all have schools where attacks have been so extreme that the schools have made it onto the list of schools who suffer the worst violations in the West Bank within area C. A large number of these schools are surrounded by the separation wall, settlements and IOF bases that have been established for the sole purpose of monitoring school activity. Students are often arrested under false charges by the IOF, accused of throwing stones despite having been in classes, or worst subjected to settler raids on the school whilst the IOF stand by and offer protection to the settlers. This all has an extremely negative effect on young Palestinians experience of education. Many students miss vital stages of their educational career due to unlawful detention resulting in missing exams or obtaining poor results due to prolonged absences, limiting their ability to go further in life thus limiting their future life opportunities. Moreover, those children who

15) <http://jordanvalleysolidarity.org/index.php/info-maps-2/health-education>

are subjected to such harassment often suffer extreme psychological trauma. In some more remote locations, parents sometimes prefer to keep their children at home to protect them from settler and IOF attacks resulting in limited educational attainment.

Many international organisations have published extensive reports on this occurrence and EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) has resorted to ensuring an international presence with children in certain areas to deter attacks from happening. Whilst this has proven effective in certain cases it shouldn't be necessary. Children should be protected by international law as minimum standard instead of by international persons whose presence deters attacks due to settler's fears of being reported. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20th November 1989¹⁶ set forth a series of articles under which children's rights should be adequately protected and attained in all situations that includes protecting children from abuse and violence regardless of their religious status or ethnicity. However, tragically, Israel's constant violations against the Palestinian people extend to children.

OCHA research discovered that incidents in the West Bank and East Jerusalem had tripled in recent years and that between 2013 and 2014 nearly 25,000 children were subjected to violence when trying to access schools and that many children as a result showed signs of psychological trauma and stress. The secondary school in Al Jiftlik in the Jordan Valley is one of the many schools in the Jordan Valley suffering from settler violence; the school is surrounded by settlements and regularly suffers from attacks against students accessing the school or against the building. The headmistress always fears for her students as many of them come to school on foot or by bicycle¹⁷.

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

17) <http://blog.eappi.org/tag/eappi-back-to-school-2014/>

The central Jordan Valley village of Fasayil is bordered by two settlements, Tomer and Petza'el (the Hebrew equivalent of the village name Fasayil, it is known to locals as the El Fa'sail settlement). The intimate details of the attack have been withheld due to the nature of the words used.

The Ebayat family from Fasayil have children who were sexually harassed by a settler in an extremely disturbing manner. Whilst the details will be removed from their account, the outline below is as follows.

Abu Ebayat

“My children, two boys one 12 and one 13 years old, herd for us each day. They are called Moustafa and Zacharia. One day they were grazing in the hills behind the village and close to the El Fa'sail settlement when a car with yellow license plates¹⁸ approached them with just one man inside. He called the children over to him and then sent Moustafa away to stand back at a distance, he held a gun at the boys and began to ask them explicit sexual questions, whilst questioning Zacharia he began to perform inappropriate acts and threatened Zacharia that he would shoot him if he didn't also engage in them. He then called Moustafa over and repeated the process again, the whole time he had the gun pointing at the boys and repeated his threat to shoot them if they didn't comply with his demands. The children began to scream and shout to attempt to attract attention from someone, but whilst they were trying to escape another car began by chance

¹⁸) Yellow license plates are only given to cars that are within the 48 boundaries, cars in the West Bank have white plates.

driving towards them, the settler immediately got back into his car and drove into El Fa'sail settlement. The children called me as soon as he had left and told me the situation. I immediately contacted the Police in Jericho, the governor of Jericho and the security officer for Fasayil. The issue escalated and the police in Jericho made contact with the Israeli police, they came and interviewed the boys, as did an Israeli human rights organisation and we had to involve a lawyer. Three days later the car appeared again where the boys were herding and this time the children called me directly, I was able to make contact through the Fasayil security officer with the security officer of the settlement who told the children he would bring the man to them for identification. When he arrived he had two men with him but my boys confirmed that neither of them was the settler that had harassed them. I feel that the security officer for the settlement knew he wasn't bringing the right settler, I think they wanted the issue covered up, they have security cameras everywhere around that settlement, in fact one tower with cameras on it is the tallest in the Jordan Valley, they would easily be able to watch the security footage and identify the car and the driver. We weren't able to pursue the matter any further. Right after the incident I also lost my permit to go to Jerusalem, maybe the two things aren't connected, I don't know, but I feel like they wanted to punish my family for talking and the settlers were able to do so through the IOF.”

This testimony also highlights the issues with seeking legal action against settler attacks, despite the involvement of the Israeli security officer for El Fa'sail there was very little attempt on their behalf to reprimand the attacker. Assuming the belief that the security officer knew he was failing to correctly identify the attacker of the children, not only was it a failure to secure an offender but it was also a failure in reporting the settler to the Israeli police. The security officers actions meant that the father of the boys was unable to pursue the issue further thus again rendering the complaint un-investigated and with no legal sanctions issued. It reinforces the notion that attacks against Palestinians are not seen as important or worthy of legal aid under the Israeli apartheid system. Yet had the attack been the same but the perpetrator Palestinian and the victim Israeli, the Palestinian would have been arrested and held most likely without access to a fair trial or legal counsel.

The Jordan Valley

The approximately 60,000 Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley are subjected to Israeli Military Law and Civil Administration rather than the more protective measures of the Palestinian Authority. However, under the Security Policy for the Prevention of Terrorism and Violence, the Palestinian Authority has an agreement with Israel to *"ensure the immediate, efficient and effective handling of any incident involving a threat or act of terrorism, violence or incitement, whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis"*. This essentially suggests that each side will co-operate with the other to ensure effective response to any form of violence or incitement and then take other precautions to ensure that such

an act will not occur again. This does include the act of damage to infrastructure such as water pumps, wells, roads and electrical circuits. However, as mentioned Israel has not sought to provide any form of security to Palestinians residing in the Jordan Valley and instead has actively contradicted this agreement by only seeking out Palestinian offenders and denying Palestinian victims any opportunity of recourse.

Equally, the Palestinian – Israeli Security Coordination Agreement states that the redeployment of Israeli Occupation Forces will not undermine the importance or place in prejudice the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people, again, a statement that has never been demonstrated through actions. Israel has been simultaneously denying the Palestinian Authority's autonomy over the Jordan Valley area, whilst expanding their arc of control over the Palestinian citizens. In doing so they have placed Israeli citizens' needs and security over that of the Palestinians, thus denying them rights and dignity in every aspect of their control. Equally, each side is meant to coordinate with the other regarding any activities that they may undertake, which poses a problem or difficult situation for the other side. Within this remit such an agreement would suggest coordination between each side regarding settlement construction, settler infrastructure construction and military training which so often injures and displaces Palestinians from Israeli declared firing zones¹⁹. However this has never occurred, so not only is Israel failing to uphold this agreement, but also the Palestinian Authority is failing to extend protection to this population.

19) Protocol concerning withdrawal of Israeli Military and Security Arrangements, available online: http://almashriq.hiof.no/general/300/320/327/gaza_and_jericho_01.html

This blatant failure to respond adequately to actions that threaten Palestinian security and failure to prevent such actions from occurring clearly demonstrates Israel's on the ground actions are in contrast to their legal requirements. It has been made continuously clear through Israel's flagrant methods of ignoring settler violence and activity that as a state, Israel endorses settler activity in the 'Judea and Samaria' region.

Personal testimonies

The Zuhdi family live in the Northern Jordan Valley in Al Farisiya – Nab'a al Ghazal on the hillside next to (Nahal) Rotem settlement. Rotem settlement was established in 1984 having begun as Nahal military camp. There is a current population of 101 settlers from 30 different families. They base themselves as an environmental settlement and engage in livelihoods such as medicinal herb growing and organic agriculture. In 2013 they submitted plans through the Jordan Valley Regional Council (settler run) to construct 170 new homes although it is unknown as to whether this has been approved yet. The settlement is bordered on three sides by firing zones and the Zuhdi families tents run along the edge of a firing zone boundary making the land available for movement and herding very limited.

Two years ago the settlers accused the family of stealing sheep from them, the family hadn't taken anything from the settlement and seeing as there are cameras located around the outer perimeters of the settlement the settlers would have known if the family had even attempted to approach the settlement. Regardless of this the settlers entered the families tent and forcing everyone to show their feet as they assumed the person who stole the sheep would have

mud on them from the fields. The family had to convince them to leave without hurting anyone and without causing damage to the families tent structures or water containers. The settlers repeatedly commented that they could involve the IOF if they so wished trying to scare the family.

Luai Ali Zuhdi

"Last year (2014) it was a cold winter and my children were freezing in the tent, so I was collecting firewood around the trees on the hill, wood that was already on the floor, and I had taken my tractor to try and get a good amount. So I am collecting wood and then the lead settler, his name is Didi, he comes to me and tells me that I have to leave and I can't take the wood. I tried to explain that it was for my children, because they were cold but he was shouting at me and began to slap me and snatched the wood from me. I had to leave without the wood and my children struggled all winter.

When I try and herd my animals on that hillside (where the settlement is) he always comes and chases me away, they have surveillance cameras located all around to watch the land, so they know where we are and come to move us. Sometimes physically. The land isn't theirs, but because we didn't have the papers to prove it was Palestinian land they took it and Israel allowed it to be classed as state land. They are now building a big fence around the hill to stop us from accessing it. Where are we meant to herd now? Didi also herds, I am sure he just wants to keep the land for himself"

Murad Ali Zuhdi

"I was herding the animals on the hill my brother (Luai) is talking about when the same man, Didi came and told me I had to leave. I tried to hide from him because we all know he can be violent, but he saw me and began to chase me, so I had to run. Two years ago I was herding on the same hillside, and a group, maybe 7 settlers came and began to attack me, they stole my ID and the money I had on me and then forced me to the army. The army took me to the check-point, (Tayasir leading to Tubas) and kept me there for 7 hours. I had no food, no water, and my animals were left on the hillside. I had to beg them to let me use a phone to call my family and get someone to retrieve the animals, I couldn't just leave them there, they could have gotten lost or injured. I was worried about my ID, in this land you have to have ID on you all the time, you never know when they (the IOF) will come and ask you for it. It is risky to not have it. I had to beg for that back as well. The settlers are so aggressive, you never know what they are going to do, I hadn't done anything that deserved being attacked."



Hussein Zuhdi

"The settlers came down the hill once and they were coming to the tents where my family live, when they got close I told them to leave, I have a wife and children, I wanted to keep them safe. They didn't like being told to leave and they beat me, I was covered in bruises and cuts from it. Later that day the army came and arrested my brother, they had no reason and I am sure it was because the settlers told them to. They just want to demonstrate who has power by hurting us."

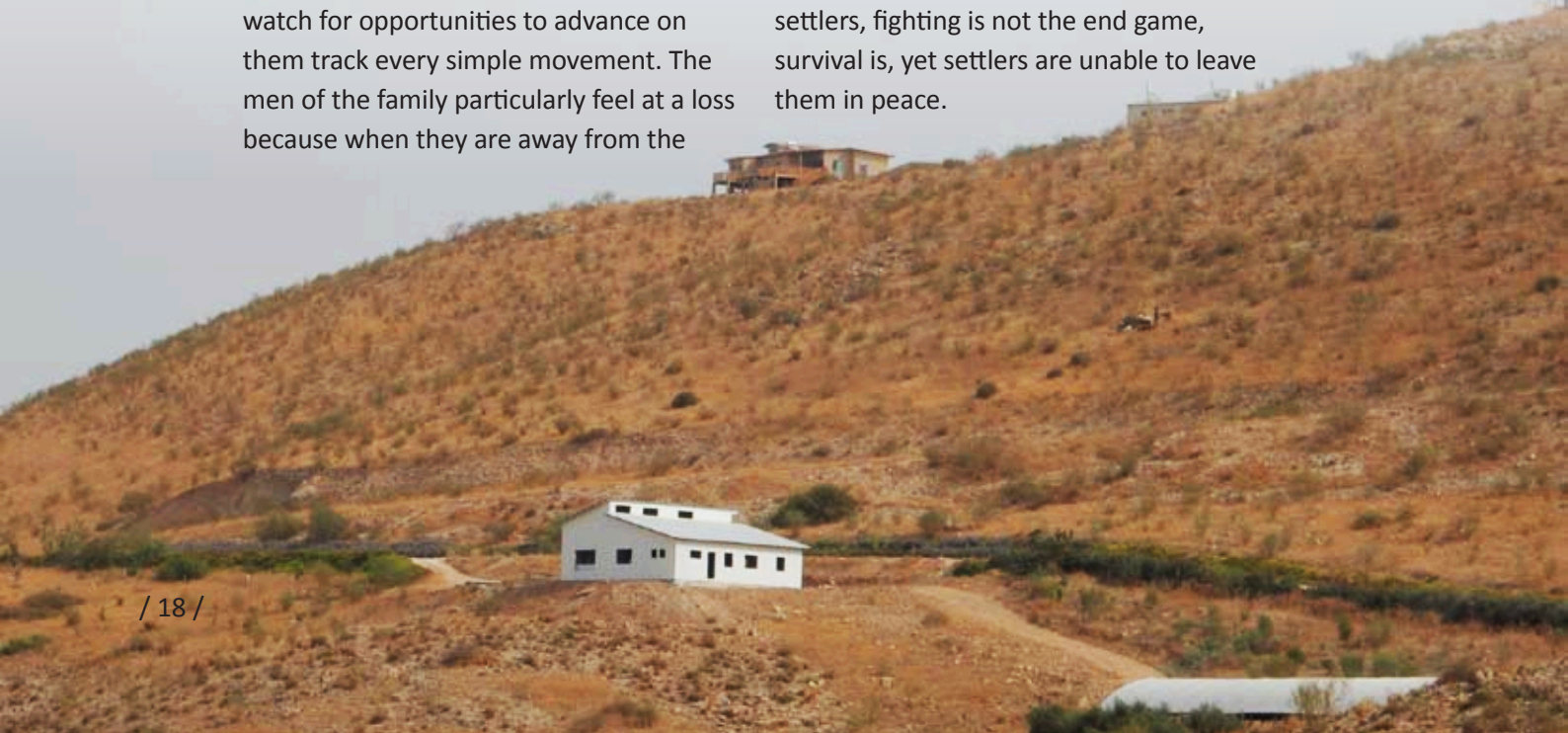


Additional attacks in the Jordan Valley 2015:

Name of settlement involved	Name of Palestinian hurt	Incident
Meskiot	Mohammad Ahmad Ellan Awad	In May Mohammad was attacked by the Meskiot security officer, he had his arms tied behind his back and was taken to IOF forces on the excuse that he was herding too close to the settlement.
	Hilal Adel Alliam Daraghmeh	In May Hilal was arrested and beaten violently to the extent he had to be taken to hospital by Israelis and changed in to a Palestinian ambulance at Hamra checkpoint.
Rotem	The Al Mahasnah family	Settlers of Rotem confiscated 10 dunams of land from the Palestinian family of Al Mahasnah.
	Mahdi Alliam Zamil	The settlers beat him and arrested him stealing 3 camels and three sheep in the process that Mahdi was forced to pay 4,000 NIS to get returned to him.
Mekhola	Local herders	Farmers were prevented by settlers from cultivating land near the Sukkort water well and then later cultivated it themselves.

These documented attacks are some of the most common, examples of settlers flaunting their power over Palestinians but with no solid reason for doing so other than ideological justifications. The damage it does is irreparable, for these families who live in the valleys under the settlements they live everyday knowing they are being watched and monitored, that settlers who watch for opportunities to advance on them track every simple movement. The men of the family particularly feel at a loss because when they are away from the

tents working they are concerned that the women and children are more vulnerable targets, yet they cannot not work when livelihoods are already so constricted. The family needs money each month to buy food and water. The painful reality for many Palestinians in this position and in these areas is that if they were left alone they would not do anything against the settlers, fighting is not the end game, survival is, yet settlers are unable to leave them in peace.



Settler attacks against livelihoods

Whilst all settler attacks have a detrimental effect on Palestinians economical situation, especially property and car damage that can be expensive to get repaired, the most affected sector of the Palestinian economy is agriculture. Olive trees have long been a focus of attacks by settlers, an attack that not only has an immediate loss on a farmers income for that season, but also in the years to come. Olive oil equates for 25% of the agricultural income in the West Bank benefiting approximately 100,000 families²⁰. OCHA reports that 10,700 trees in 2013 were damaged at an estimated loss of \$750 US per tree each year²¹. The vast majority of attacks occur during the olive-harvesting season that takes place each year in October. In 2015 between January and September 1,222 saplings were damaged and approximately 11,000 trees with damage done to over 5,000 in just one day by settler attacks in the village of Turmus'ayya in Ramallah²².

As with any other form of violent settler attacks, attacks against land and olive trees are rarely investigated with only 4 attacks ending in indictment from the Israeli police out of a reported 246 incidents between 2005 and 2014²³, just 1.62% of reported incidents. Police reports do not accurately demonstrate the extent of the problem seeing as incidents have to be filed with

20) Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale, Mars 2014, "Tensions autour des colonies, conséquences humanitaires pour la population palestinienne."

21) Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale, Mars 2014, "Tensions autour des colonies, conséquences humanitaires pour la population palestinienne."

22) http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_11_10_english.pdf

23) http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_11_26_english.pdf

Israeli police or the Samaria and Judea District Police, both of whose systems are discriminatory towards Palestinians making it incredibly difficult for Palestinians to file police reports.

The agricultural sector in Palestine was previously the largest, employing the most people. However, with the strict Israeli imposed sanctions on exporting and importing, land control and water accessibility the agriculture in Palestine has rapidly declined leaving many farmers out of work and the majority of the population's food insecure. The loss of land has meant that many farmers have been denied access to their olive groves meaning the trees remain untended and the harvests simply rot. This is estimated to cost the Palestinian economy around US \$3,500,000 annually²⁴. Settlers attack the trees, sometimes setting fire to them, sometimes uprooting them, other times attacking families as they try and collect the harvest making it too difficult and risky for them to continue. Olive trees are majestic because of the length of time they take to grow and their life span, according to PU-AMI (Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale) if an olive tree is 50 years old and gets damaged then it takes another 5 years for it to bear fruit again and 20 years to fully recover, this makes every damaged tree a significant economic loss to families and Palestine.

Even outside of olive harvesting season, attacks on farmers are common with settlers throwing stones, attacking individuals and stealing equipment during the working day making Palestinians farmers feel vulnerable and threatened when accessing

24) Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale, Mars 2014, "Tensions autour des colonies, conséquences humanitaires pour la population palestinienne."

their land. Not only does this cause intense psychological damage to the farmers themselves, it also means that during periods of high attacks when farmers can not physically access their lands, the crops often fail due to lack of harvesting resulting in further economic losses and damage to the ground when crops begin to rot. Stealing and damaging of farming equipment is also a settler attack against Palestinian farmers, with cases being reported of settlers entering Palestinian villages under the cover of nightfall and to cause extensive damage to machinery. Often without the adequate machinery farmers are unable to do their work or at least are heavily encumbered resulting in limited ability to work the land. Increasingly common is also the burning of farm land by settlers, directly setting fire to Palestinian crops killing entire harvests and causing extensive damage to the top soil so that often the fields have to be left fallow for a year. Such attacks result in further economic losses or the need for heavy treatment with chemical fertilisers to stimulate the nutrients needed from the soil for a healthy crop. These fertilisers are often brought directly from Israel with little or no directions as to how to use them again resulting in further damage to the soil and over dependency on chemical stimulation to produce high yields.

Establishing secure and sustainable livelihoods in the Jordan Valley is proving increasingly difficult, the economic sanctions and land zoning policies have made traditional livelihoods such as olive tree cultivation, herding and other forms of agriculture increasingly difficult and limited. As a result when settler attacks are aimed at destroying Palestinian livelihoods, it affects families more so than if it were aimed at an Israeli family. Many of the Palestinian families who have relocated from the Jordan

Valley have been forced to do so because of economic situations, being unable to secure enough money on a regular basis to support the family, thus settlers attacking potential income is yet another method of increasing the pressure on Palestinian families in the hope that they will leave the area. Settlers live illegally in the Jordan Valley receiving generous benefits from the Israeli government and subsidised living, all the while systematically destroying Palestinian livelihoods in a bid to stage a hostile takeover of the land.

However, the irony of this situation is that if the settlers were to succeed and take full control of the Jordan Valley they would be forced to spend large quantities of money in order to rehabilitate the land that they have been so aggressively pushing to own. This suggests a complete lack of care for the land itself, and instead returning to the power binaries discussed elsewhere in this report. The lack of impunity has instead allowed settlers to feel largely in control of the land regardless of whether they are in line with the Israeli governmental agenda.



Settler attacks against water

Water is a scarce and precious resource in the Jordan Valley, once abundant with natural springs and wells the occupation has slowly aimed its policies at confiscating water sources, digging deeper wells that slowly drain the water entering Palestinian wells and preventing permits from being accepted for constructing water wells. As a result, the Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley face severe water shortages throughout the summer months with some living on as little as 20 litres a day, equivalent to that recommended by the World Health Organisation as needed for survival during times of war. Water not only affects the families living in the Jordan Valley but also the extent to which they can keep livestock, as herding requires access to water sources and tankered water is a highly expensive way of obtaining water each month, especially the amount needed for the survival of animals.

To begin with, water was taken over by occupational policies as a separate issue to settler attacks, strategic land zoning and classifications by the Israeli government ensured that water was primarily under their control. Palestinians were prevented from using their designated water, an approximately 250 million cubic metres allocation, of the Jordan River, whilst simultaneously draining more for irrigation and reservoirs under Israeli control. Additionally, water springs known to be profitable to Palestinians were incorporated into state lands or firing zones rendering them inaccessible. Those that remained in recent years became an open target to settler attacks who inherently recognise that without water Palestinians will struggle to live on the land and thus eventually such an issue can cause a family to relocate.

Destruction of wells and contamination of the water have become known tactics by settlers against Palestinian villages.

Towards the end of 2014, in celebration of a Jewish holiday settlers in the Al-Malah area of the Jordan Valley destroyed or damaged seven wells in one day. For some they damaged the covers of the well, which will eventually result in the contamination of water since there is no longer any protection from the elements and natural debris rendering it dirty for drinking. Other wells were simply damaged beyond repair rendering them no longer usable. Such activities are not uncommon in the Jordan Valley and many Palestinians view them as expulsion methods.

In recent months there have been a streak of settler attacks against other water sources as well, in Ein Sukkot there is a natural spring situated on Palestinian land that used to be used for drinking, livestock and occasionally as a swimming hole. However, the location of the pool lies along the Israeli established border with Jordan. Originally, when this border was created the land of Ein Sukkot was within the Jordan Valley. Since the creation of this border in 1967, however, the line moved slightly, and the border moved into the valley resulting in the village of Ein Sukkot having approximately 1,500 dunams of land taken from them, including the land that the spring resided in. Now the spring has been colonised by settlers using the spring for swimming. When Palestinians attempt to access the spring the settlers either directly attack them or call for reinforcement from the IOF who then disperse the Palestinians or threaten them with arrest. There was a similar occurrence in Ein Hilweh in the north of the Jordan Valley. The settlement of Maskiyot borders the village areas and has incorporated the Palestinian spring into their

lands; again they use the spring only to swim in despite knowing how the lack of water affects Palestinian families and livelihoods in the area. The same thing happened in Al-Auja where again the springs have been appropriated for settler's pleasure despite the overwhelming lack of water for the village and the settler's access to an abundance of water. This shows how settlers are taking over Palestinian land marks and areas in order to create new facts on the ground that aim at supporting their claim to the land and their history which in large they have re-created for the sake of their ideological gains.

The settlers from the settlement of Mekhola recently damaged 500 metres of Palestinian water pipes that fed an irrigation system in an agricultural field. This grossly affects the ability of farmers to feed their crops, thus damaging their economic gains in two ways, both through the loss of crop production resulting in people not being able to pay bills or debts as well as placing the economic burden on the farmers to fix the piping systems in order to use the irrigation systems once more. There was again a similar incidence in Miswah village next to Al Jiftlik where settlers had been continuously harassing Palestinian villagers and eventually called in the IOF to confiscate nearly 12 km of water pipes.

Such attacks again demonstrate the settler mentality in the Jordan Valley. Attacks are used as a method of harassment, expulsion and as a method of demonstrating the power they have over the Palestinians with the support of the IOF. None of these settlers are held accountable for their actions and as discussed the location and reporting methods for Palestinians to seek retribution for these acts are difficult to access and rarely result in action on the ground.

Settler attacks against Palestinian heritage

Israel as a state has continuously used its power to displace Palestinian heritage, instead creating a new monologue around the land focusing on Israeli history. Thus again, attempting to justify their claim to the land. By establishing such an extensive settler population in the Jordan Valley, Israel has been able to instate changes on the land that feed into their growing historical lineage based on the existence of the land of Israel during biblical times but conveniently missing the subsequent groups and populations from more recent eras. Israel has also placed a large focus on ensuring that there are numerous memorials and similar objects throughout the Jordan Valley that are held in order to commemorate Israeli soldiers who have fallen there. However they have not done the same with Palestinian lives, again demonstrating the extent to which they are replacing Palestinian history with their own. Settlers have consistently fed into this emerging dialogue, using their territorial position on the ground to take over and instate Jewish and Israeli landmarks in replacement of Palestinian ones. This is evident when driving through the West Bank, close to each settlement there is some landmark that relates to the Jewish claim on the land and which is closed to Palestinians.

The Jordan Valley is the largest claim to heritage for Palestine. The Jordan Valley is the historic centre of Palestine, boasting its agriculture and traditional lifestyles with its natural abundance of land, water and other natural resources. In itself, the Jordan Valley is a naturally dry area but not arid as it currently is, the state of the land at present is the effect of degrading practices by Israel

and settlers that over extract water and lead to intense desertification. This loss of land and natural resources has crippled the ability of Palestinians to retain their traditional lifestyles; Bedouin herding lifestyles are traditionally the way of life in this region. Unfortunately, there are now only about 6,000 Bedouin's left in the Jordan Valley, many of whom are still forced into abandoning the old ways of life in favour of finding new methods of earning income in the wake of loss of resources. Again, the contribution that settlers make to this demonstrates the extent to which settlers and the IOF play into the expulsion methods forced onto Palestinians creating situations that result in indirect forcible transfer due to life being too difficult to remain otherwise.

The southern area of the Jordan Valley is where the Dead Sea lies, the largest and lowest natural salt water basin on earth and situated on the border between Palestine and Jordan. This natural resource is both one of Palestine's most known natural heritage sites whilst simultaneously providing an economic boost for the country. However, the appropriation of the Dead Sea by Israel, that now sits in the hands of settler communities who continue to plunder the minerals and

muds it provides, has left Palestine at a disadvantage and out of reach of their own resource's. The settler communities along the west shore of the banks now control industries bringing them nearly \$29 million in revenue each year, all of which is used to support the settler economy, further industry and other settler activities at the expense of the Palestinians. Furthermore, at the rate of current depletion rates, which sit at 1.2metres annually, the Dead Sea simply won't exist if Israel keeps up its current rate.

It would appear that no land mark is too small for settlers and for Israel, who now control most heritage sites within the West Bank including locations such as Ein Gedi, Herodian south of Beit Sahour and Marsada have all been incorporated into Israeli control in order to instate Jewish history as the only history associated with the land thus eradicating Palestinian history and heritage despite the numerous collections of people who have in centuries gone resided on this land.



Conclusion

Settlements and settlers have become a separate enterprise in the Jordan Valley, once a strategic placement made by a succession of governments, settlers have now begun operating under their own agenda, ensuring Palestinian displacement and forcible transfer with the backing of the IOF. The increase in settler attacks that have been seen throughout the past few years only serves to demonstrate how settlers are targeting Palestinian communities and villages to ensure life is made as hard for them as possible thus contributing to the reasons for relocation.

Settlers have consistently targeted aspects of Palestinian life in the Jordan Valley that are essential to economical, social and civil survival. Moreover the disturbing increase in price tagging attacks against Palestinians both in the Jordan Valley and throughout the West Bank shows how settler's policies are becoming more and more aggressive. Price tagging attacks will not cease to occur and are only increasing in gravity in response to IOF and governmental policies seen to serve Palestinian communities. Moreover the disturbing lack of Israeli response to such attacks only demonstrates the extent to which settlers have become their own entity operating under complete impunity and essentially outside of the Israeli jurisdiction. The combination of this lack of policing coupled with increasing aggression has resulted in a perilous situation in the Jordan Valley for Palestinians.

No area of Palestinian life is exempt from price tag attacks or settler attacks; livelihoods, agriculture, water, houses, cars and people all suffer the consequences of settler agendas. Attacks against schools and children are increasing, especially in the Jordan Valley due to its categorization as area C, meaning the Palestinian Ministry of Education has a very limited mandate and can not offer the school any form of protection. Increasingly, children and teachers are being targeted not only within the school grounds but also on their walks to and from the school where settlers

assault them, follow and harass them, and sometimes raid the schools during school hours. Not only does this pose a serious threat to the physical and psychological wellbeing of teachers and students but it also grossly disrupts the extent to which these children are able to secure an education, moreover due to the complicit nature of the relationship between settlers and the IOF, the soldiers often perform arrests if the children ever engage in any form of self defence or retaliation against the settler attacks. Thus further damaging their education and future chances due to detention periods.

Despite the land and the ability of the land to host extensive agriculture, settlers have shown no remorse in directly attacking land including olive trees, Palestinian farm land, water pipes and other water source's, despite knowing that the land needs such aspects for healthy survival. Full annexation and therefore full control of the land is paramount to the Jordan Valley settler community, making such actions hard to understand. Despite relying so heavily on the land and its natural resources to host farming, Jordan Valley settlers have consistently failed to put the needs and welfare of the environment first, instead focusing all of their efforts of the expulsion of Palestinian farmers and communities through the destruction of natural resources needed for everyday life and for irrigation. Again this only serves to demonstrate the true agenda for the Jordan Valley in that agriculture is not the only factor behind the determination to win the land, it is instead a host of ideological factors driving these settler groups.

In order for settler attacks and price tagging events to not only be controlled but also policed and criminalised would require a large shift in Israeli governmental policies, to date, all moves towards ensuring an end to such attacks have been symbolic with no concrete changes on the ground or within legislation. Left unchecked, settlers will continue to use their growing power to further blight the lives of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley.



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

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: info@maan-ctr.org

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



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