

Overview

- The “Shiloh” bloc accommodates the settlement of Shiloh and its “satellites” - a cluster of outposts¹ built to its East. This settlement bloc poses impacts on the Palestinian villages of Al Mughayyir, Iskaka, Jalud, Turmusaya, Qaryut, Qusra and Yasuf. Here, land dispossession takes place through a variety of methods: lack of law enforcement against settler crimes and harassment, government land allocation to Israeli citizens, and declaration of archaeological sites to take over land.
- The Shiloh bloc is one of the settlement and outpost clusters in Area C that form geographically contiguous lines stretching from the Green Line in the west to the Jordan Valley in the east. Since access to lands located near settlements (in continuous expansion) is restricted, the result is the **fragmentation of the West Bank and severe infringement on the Palestinians’ right to self-determination.**



Foreground, on the right: agricultural structure destroyed by settlers.
Background, far left: edge of Esh Kodesh outpost

Methods of settlement expansion

● **Retroactive authorisation of outposts**

In recent years the Government of Israel has adopted a silent policy aimed at establishing new settlements or expanding existing ones by retroactively approving outposts. In the Shiloh bloc this has become apparent with the approval of Rehelim and Nofei Nehemia as new settlements. In addition, Israeli authorities have initiated procedures to allow for the retroactive approval of Haroeh, HaYovel and Shvut Rachel outposts. Thereby, thousands of settlers who engaged in the illegal establishment of communities and illegal construction inside them, in a process that often involves land grabbing and other violations of the rights of Palestinians, are 'rewarded' with the retroactive approval of these communities.²

● **Archaeology and tourism as a means of land grab – 'Tel Shiloh'**

'Tel Shiloh', located on the land of the Palestinian village of Qaryut, is one of the most highly invested-in Israeli archaeological tourist sites in the West Bank.³ The local settlement authority ('Binyamin Regional Council') regards the site as a central feature in the development of tourism in the area. Developing 'Tel Shiloh' is also of central importance in the policies of the last and probably the next government, as evidenced in the fact that it has been included in the category of national heritage sites funded by Israel.⁴

In 2014, building plans for Tel Shiloh were submitted to the Central Planning Bureau of [the West Bank]. The plans feature a 11,000 m² visitors' center – an unprecedentedly large facility for an antiquities site. According to the plan, the site would be developed into a conference, events and tourism center with the capacity to accommodate 5,000 visitors per day. Its goal is to strengthen the settlements and the Israeli presence in the area through tourism.

Although the site is located on the lands of the Palestinian village of Qaryut, Palestinians are barred access to the site, due to security restrictions imposed by Israel.

● **Settler violence as a means of land takeover**

Since 2006, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has recorded a general increase in incidents of settler violence in the West Bank, including incidents of intimidation and physical assault, trespassing, preventing access to lands and vandalizing of trees and damage to other agricultural property and Palestinian owned vehicles and houses.⁵ Criminal activity by settlers, which for the most part goes unpunished,⁶ is often followed by the takeover of land in the friction zones where the incidents take place, and its cultivation by settlers. This has become a widely used modality of settlement expansion in the areas surrounding Shiloh.⁷

Humanitarian Impact: Qaryut, Jalud and Qusra

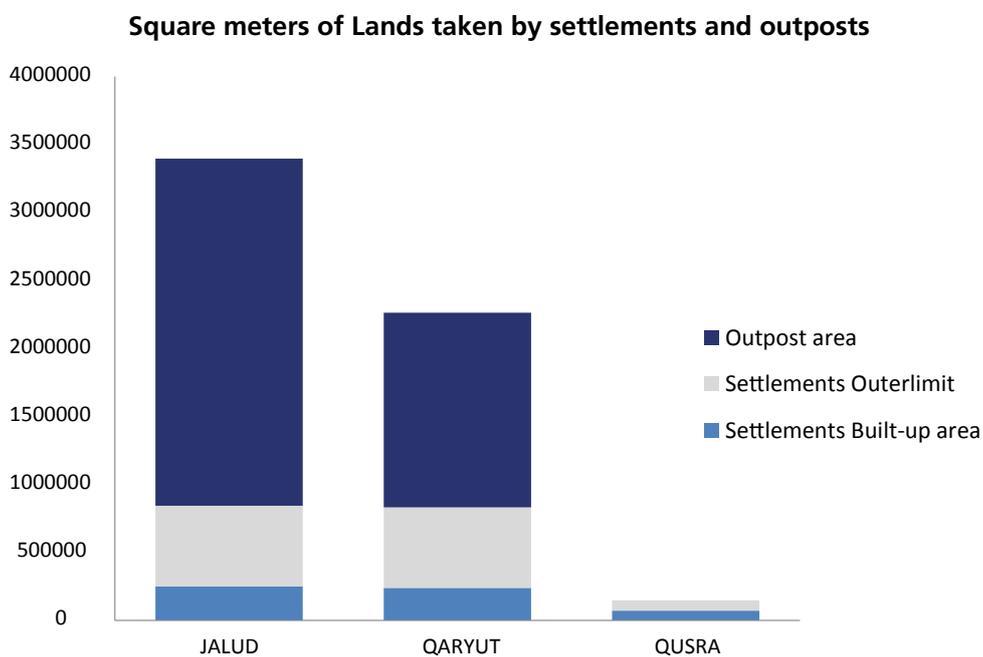
The continuous expansion of the areas controlled by the cluster of settlements and outposts around Shiloh, has a direct impact on the overall living conditions of the Palestinian people in the area, for whom farming constitutes a main source of income. The residents of Qaryut, Jalud and Qusra have seen their agricultural practice and productivity undermined, with a detrimental effect on their livelihoods and resilience. At the same time, restrictions on movement have affected access to public services including health and education.

● Impact on Livelihoods

Of 46 settler related incidents documented by OCHA in Qaryut, Qusra and Jalud between 2012 and 2014, 43 incidents affected the livelihoods of farmers in the vicinity of Israeli settlements and outposts.

While the built-up areas of the villages are located in Area B, the vast majority of their agricultural land is found in areas designated as Area C. The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements has encroached onto a significant part of the villages' land in Area C. In farmland that is the frequent site of settler attacks, and on Palestinian lands in close proximity to or fenced off by settlements, Israeli authorities allow farmers access to their land only after 'prior coordination' for a few days during the olive harvest and ploughing seasons, with direct detrimental effects on the agricultural yield.

Moreover, systematic attacks and intimidation by residents of these outposts have resulted in a gradual reduction in Palestinian farmers' access to land that has not been expropriated or taken over.⁸



● Mental health and psychosocial impact of settler violence

The insecurity experienced by communities in the northern West Bank has damaging physical, social and psychological consequences affecting their well-being and development. In this context, acute stress seems the norm. What could be mistaken sometimes for resilience is the necessary adaptation to a stressful environment in which on-going conflicts are part of daily life. But this adaptation has a price: the most commonly reported psychological reactions by adults and children in 27 Nablus Governorate communities receiving support from MdM France, are constant fear and anxiety (55% of the beneficiaries), traumatic stress (47.5%) and sleeping disturbances (62.5 %). Parents and caregivers report difficulties in caring for their children, and fear, uncertainty and violence contribute to an environment of chaos, which reduces communities' resources.

Palestinian villages:⁹

Qaryut

Village population: 2,756

Settlements located on village land: Shiloh and Eli settlements, Nof Harim and Hayovel outposts.

Total estimated settler population: 5,937

Settler related incidents recorded by OCHA between 2012-2014: 16 settler-related incidents caused the damage of 385 olive trees,

2 Palestinian injuries, 41 dunums of agricultural land damaged / affected.

Jalud

Village population: 551

Settlements located on village land: Shilo settlement, Shvut Rachel, Adei Ad, Ahiya, Esh Kodesh, Kida and Habayit Ha'adom outposts.

Total estimated settler population: 3,299

Settler related incidents recorded by OCHA between 2012-2014: 12 incidents caused the damage of 425 olive trees, 4 Palestinian injuries, 156.5 dunums of agricultural land damaged / affected, and seven Palestinian vehicles were vandalized.

Qusra

Village population: 5,197

Settlements directly affecting village of Qusra: Migdalim settlement and Esh Kodesh outpost.

Total estimated population: 218

Settler related incidents recorded by OCHA between 2012-2014: 18 settler related incidents caused the damage of 513 olive trees, 39 Palestinian injuries, 2.5 dunums of land being levelled, and 2 houses, an animal shelter, water well, 3 agricultural rooms and 2 Palestinian vehicles were damaged. Settler related incidents in Qusra have suspected to be primarily caused by nearby Esh Kodesh, a known hub of violence in the area. In September 2011, during intensive clashes between settlers and Palestinians in the village, one Palestinian man was killed and the first floor of a mosque was burned.

Recommendations

Protected Persons

- As the Occupying Power, Israel must take all necessary measures to effectively protect Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from acts of violence and criminal offenses by Israeli settlers, to ensure public order and accountability in a non-discriminatory manner, and promote the full enjoyment of their rights under international law.

Law enforcement and accountability

- Israeli security forces – both the Israel Defense Forces and Israel Police – have the obligation to protect Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, and must take effective action to prevent and stop violent attacks by Israeli settlers.
- Israeli authorities must ensure that all security forces receive and convey clear instructions regarding their responsibilities to protect Palestinians and their property from settler violence, and that members of security forces are held accountable for any failures in this regard.

- The Israeli law enforcement system must effectively and impartially investigate acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property, and hold those responsible accountable for these crimes. Settlers responsible for violent acts, including against children and school infrastructure, must be held accountable to the full extent of Israeli law. Accountability must also be ensured for violence by Israeli security forces.

- During the olive harvest, concerted action must be taken to prevent violence by settlers against Palestinians and their property, including olive trees. Sustained protective and preventive action by the Israeli security forces is required in identified “hot spots”, including beyond the hours when there is a coordinated presence of security forces to ensure Palestinians’ access to olive groves.

Access to land

- The safe and unfettered access of Palestinian farmers to their land must be ensured all year round, beyond the coordinated access during the annual olive harvest.



Shiloh settlement, as seen from Qaryut. On the right, “Tel Shiloh” archaeological site and visitors centre.

Endnotes

1. All settlements are illegal under international law; in addition, outposts are illegal under Israeli law.
2. "Under the Radar – Israel's silent policy of transforming unauthorized outposts into official settlements", Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights and The Rights Forum, March 2015
3. Emek Shaveh, "Interim conclusions from the discussion of the objections to the development plans of Tel Shiloh (Khirbet Seilun)", August 12, 2014
4. Y. Mizrahi, "Tel Shiloah" in Israel's 'National Heritage Sites' Project in the West Bank: Archeological importance and political significance", Emek Shaveh, June 2012, Pp. 12-15
5. Of approximately 2,100 settler related incidents recorded over the past eight years, at least 25% took place in the Nablus district alone.
6. Yesh Din monitoring of 1,045 Israel Police investigations into alleged offenses by Israeli civilians against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank between 2005 and 2014, showed that 91.4 per cent of investigations concluded without indictment. Of these concluded investigations, 83.3 per cent were closed in circumstances suggesting investigative failure. See "Law Enforcement on Israeli Civilians in the West Bank", Yesh Din, November 2014
7. At least 93,000 dunum of land have been identified by Kerem Navot as either allocated or actually used for Israeli agricultural activity in the West Bank. The actual built-up area of the settlements and outposts constitute about 60,000 dunum, not including the Israeli neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem), "Israeli Settler Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank", Kerem Navot, 2013, p.6
8. http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2013_02_28_english.pdf. Cases on Access restrictions taken from OCHA humanitarian bulletin, January 2013, pp.11-12
9. All population data for Palestinian villages based on estimates of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for 2015, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/nabls.htm. Population data for settlements and outposts based on Peace Now estimates for 2011 except Shvut Rachel and HaBait Ha'adom, 2008 : <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/content/settlements-and-outposts>



UNITED NATIONS
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

