



A river of sewage from the Israeli settlements runs through Palestinian agricultural land near Abu Dis

Taking over and changing the use of the land

The environment in Palestine has been under severe attack since the Israeli occupation in 1967. The land in Palestine was previously used largely for agriculture – olive trees were hugely important, along with other crops and animals.

Since 1967, Israel has pushed to take over the land, but this has not been for agriculture. **Huge areas have been taken over for the building of new Israeli towns (“settlements” which are illegal in areas of occupation under international humanitarian law) and military camps.**

The **huge, illegal Wall** that has been built since 2002, snaking deep into the West Bank and separating people from their families, has also an environmental impact.

Settlements and the Wall

Israeli control of the land has not gone along with care for it. Although Israel has declared a number of areas “environmental areas,” this has been largely to prevent Palestinian access to those areas, and in cases such as Jabal Abu Ghneim (now Har Homa settlement near Bethlehem), these “environmental areas” have been the base for extending settlement building.

Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association promotes awareness of the human rights situation in Abu Dis and works to change it. We organise public information, visits to and from Abu Dis, links work and positive projects in Abu Dis, and we campaign on human rights issues. For more information on our work please see www.camdenabudis.net

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Protect the environment in Palestine

The Israeli occupation and its settlements are actively polluting land and water and affecting Palestinian people’s health



“The issue of the environment links to the human rights abuses in Palestine – It stems from the expropriation of land and prevents people from living a normal life...”

Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

Promoting human rights and respect for international humanitarian law

www.camdenabudis.net



Israelis remove Palestinian olive trees in Khalit Abed, Abu Dis

Taking land and killing trees

Across the West Bank, as in Abu Dis for example, Palestinian land-owners have had to watch their agricultural land become a major building site, with hilltops across the country carved up and built on for Jewish-only housing and also for a whole new road network built for Israeli drivers only.

Thousands of olive trees have been cut down, devastating the Palestinian economy and the culture that has made the olive tree central. In other places, fully-grown trees, some of them ancient, are being dug up and transported to Israel and abroad for sale.

Wildlife

Many birds, plants and animals that Palestinian villagers remember on the hills of Palestine have gone, possibly because of this pollution, while they are convinced that Israel has brought new pests on purpose to discourage Palestinians from using the land outside their villages: wild dogs that live in packs, and wild boar that dig up crops and are dangerous to people.



Israeli contractors bring a mysterious black liquid in containers like this and pour it into a lake on Abu Dis land, which is marked "danger"

Water

Palestinian agriculture and people have always depended on the water of lakes and springs in the fertile hills of the West Bank as well as the Jordan river. Since 1967, these water sources have been taken into the control of Israel, which has drained lakes near Tiberias and rerouted the Jordan river to take the water to Israel. One of the results is the drying up of the Dead Sea.

In 2009, Amnesty International reported that Israel is using water as a means to pressure the Palestinians. They estimate that each Israeli settler in the West Bank has twenty times as much available water as each local Palestinian.

Israel has taken over the major aquifers of the West Bank hills by building settlements on them. This has caused great problems to Palestinian agriculture and also for household drinking water.

The Palestinians are now in a position where they are having to buy back their water from settlements and Israeli companies.



Israeli rubbish dump on Abu Dis land

Pollution

Currently Israel is relocating some of its most polluting factories into industrial settlements in Palestinian areas of the West Bank. A huge plastic factory near Salfet, for example, is releasing effluent into a local beauty spot – local people point to a green, smelly river and the dumping of a mysterious brown substance that they fear is linked to a local hotspot of cancer.

Sewage rivers run out of settlements across Palestinian land, poisoning trees and making the land impossible to use. One example is in Wad al-Nar between Abu Dis/Sawahreh and Bethlehem. Military training is leaving unexploded ordinance and unknown pollution on expropriated agricultural land. Settlers seeking to move local villagers often poison wells with rubbish.

Abu Dis

Abu Dis, like other areas of the West Bank, is worried about an **unexplained increase in the number of cancers**, and local people wonder if this is partly because of a huge rubbish dump that has been created on Abu Dis land. The owners of this land have been unable to prevent its takeover to create a **massive mountain of rubbish from local settlements**.

And Israelis have made an **unexplained black lake** next to Abu Dis, and surrounded it with warning signs. Local people watch a black substance being brought in and taken away, and can only worry about what it is that they are living next to.

