Transcript of UAWC Press Conference on Settler Pogroms

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Moderator:
Tamam Quran – UAWC Media Officer

Participants:
Nida Naasan – Nurse in Al Mughayyir clinic
Ghassan Abu Alia – Farmer and agricultural cooperative member in Al Mughayyir
Ameen Abu Alia – Al Mughayyir village council president
Moayyad Bsharrat – UAWC Lobbying and Advocacy Director
Yasmeen El-Hasan – UAWC International Advocacy Officer

For inquiries:
info@uawc-pal.org
yasmeen@uawc-pal.org
moayyad@uawc-pal.org
uawc-pal.org

Transcript:

Tamam: Hello everyone and welcome to the Union of Agricultural Work Committees’ (UAWC) press conference. We are excited to have you all here. Today’s press conference is covering the Israeli settler pogroms that have taken place, specifically from the 12th to 16th of April but have continuously gone on with extreme violence since the beginning of the genocide on Gaza. Just a bit of information on UAWC and the work that we do. We first of all wanted to have this press conference from Al Mughayyir so you can hear firsthand from nurses, farmers, and locals within the community of what they experienced and have continuously experienced. For those who do not know our work in the union, we’re a Palestinian grassroots civil civil society organization. We work to support the steadfastness of Palestinian farmers, fisher people, community, and peasants, rural communities, communities within the Area C. We really work on ensuring that we stay on our land and protect our farmers and our land under the Israeli colonial occupation. We have offices all over the West Bank and Gaza. We work together to cover everything that’s happening within the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Our work includes land reclamation and rehabilitation, agricultural work roads, water systems, and we have an indigenous seed bank, and we also do agro-ecological training, and much more work. To learn more and to support us, please follow our website or follow us on social media. We have a Facebook and an Instagram page but our website is UAWC-pal.org. If you have any questions that we do not cover during the press conference you can contact us directly at info@uawc-pal.org. From the union we will be speaking in English, our guests from
Al Mughayyir will be speaking in Arabic, and there’s an instant translation, if you just press on the globe on the bottom of your zoom screen. We will accept questions at the end, please feel free to write your questions in the q and a chat and we’ll get to them at the end of the press conference. Thank you everyone and now I’d like to introduce our panelists. We have here Yasmeen El-Hasan, who is the international advocacy officer, and then we have Mr. Moayyad Bsharrat, who is the director of lobbying and Advocacy Unit, then we have Mr. Ghassan Abu Alia who is a farmer from Al Mughayyir, and we also have Nida Naasan who is a nurse here in the village in the clinic. We will also have the head of the village council join us, his name is Mr. Ameen Abu Alia. Ok our first speaker for today will be Mr. Moayyad. Please give us background on everything that's going on.

**Moayyad:** Yes, the colonial settlement project started and accelerated and in this area and the last three years, the Israeli settler attacks in a way that the people cannot have the ability to continue. In the last six months, the Israeli settler attack evacuated totally more than 18 Bedouin communities in all of the West Bank, including killing of more than sixteen Palestinians in many villages. Today we are in Al Mughayyir village. This is a very important village in the Ramallah Governorate, in the eastern part of Ramallah governorate. The Israeli settlement program started from 1976 with the Igal Alon project which is to evacuate all the area parallel to the Jordan River and to make the area empty from the Palestinian existence so the Israelis evacuate the area from the Palestinians by several attacks and projects against the Palestinians. The last thing that happened in this area was from twelve to sixteenth of April twenty twenty four. A group of more than 1500 Israeli settlers organized an attack attacking more than twenty five Palestinian villages and communities in governorates of Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tubas, Hebron, and other governorates. These attacks killed more than five Palestinians, one from Al Mughayyir, Jihad Abu Alia from Batien, another farmer and two herders in Aqraba village. Yesterday they killed another Palestinian in an ambulance they killed him. He is an ambulance driver. This organized attack making loss of more than ten million ILS from the affected villages. They burned totally or partially more than 85 houses, they destroyed eleven plastic water tanks, they destroyed and totally damaged more than 185 cars, trucks, and also agricultural tractors. In the agricultural sector, they burned totally 20 animal shelters, stole 200 heads of sheep and goats, and they slaughtered more than fifty lambs in the village, and they partially burned 2 chicken farms and 1 oil press mill. **All of these attacks, it's organized and have a green light from the Israeli government, especially from the two ministers Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, who is the finance minister in the Israeli government who gives the green light for Israeli settlers and settler movements and organizations to accelerate their attacks in the Area C in the West Bank. As we see also and monitor from the seventh of October until now that more than 65% of our olive trees and all orchards, Palestinians cannot access to it because of the Israeli settler attack and Israeli restriction over to access to the land from the seventh of October until now more than 840 military checkpoint from between the cities, refugee camps, and agricultural land that prohibited the Palestinian from access to their agricultural land. Over to you Tamam.

Tamam: Thank you so much Moayyad for giving such important contextual background knowing the actual numbers of harm and destruction that has happened in Al Mughayyir and around. Now we're moving over to Nida, the nurse in the village clinic, she'll be speaking in Arabic but there is an instant translator into English. So make sure to press the globe at the bottom of your zoom screen for this translation. Hello Nida, can you share with us what you witnessed the day or the days of the attacks on
your village? As wounds and injuries in general, please share with us what you witnessed and had to deal with during this period of time. Specifically, what as individuals and as a community are dealing with here in Al Mughayyir by the hand of Israeli settlers?

Nida: First of all, us here in Al Mughayyir village suffer almost daily from Israeli settler attacks and pogroms. These pogroms are no longer occasional attacks, now we witness since the Gaza genocide almost daily attacks and pogroms by Israeli settlers. Of course the losses and injuries, the things we are seeing and witnessing are on both the young and the older generations, honestly, we are shocked and horrified. We have never experienced such blind attacks for years. We have always experienced attacks by the Israeli settlers but nothing as aggressive and targeting all age groups, never as extreme as it has been the past few months. They have been horrible attacks, specifically as parents we never expected for attacks to be this severe. The burning of homes and the children, the young children screaming, as well as their mothers. We do not know where to even begin with who to aid first. Who do we help first? The injured? Mothers? Children? We no longer can handle the situation with the capacities and capabilities we have. The situation really was extremely dangerous and difficult. We do not have anything to protect and defend ourselves with except with rocks. And honestly, what effect are rocks going to have when settlers come into the village, all of them completely armed, and prohibited neighboring villages to come and support or help us? We as a village have had to have all members of our community, woman, man, and child, to defend and protect ourselves. With the most basic object, rocks. We do not have anything else to protect ourselves with. We do not have any weapons. Many have fallen from injuries and wounds. Homes have been completely burned down. Even animals could not escape settler violence. Even us as medics and nurses, we were under attack by the settlers, with fire, ambulances were attacked and shot at as we attempted to pick up the wounded and injured. We were struggling to take the wounded, the Israelis even wanted to keep them or let them bleed out. All we wanted to do was aid the wounded and injured. But we paramedics were under constant gun fire while trying to do our job. Because the Israelis wanted to abduct them as well as the harm they already caused them. What is worse than all of this, we as medics, once we were able to take the wounded and injured and put them into the ambulance, we couldn’t take them to the clinic or to a hospital because they closed the checkpoint and all entries and exits of the village. They placed a new checkpoint and had it closed for over two hours as injured people bled out in the ambulance. They held the ambulance at the checkpoint for a certain amount of time and didn’t allow anyone near it or for it to move. Yes, we have martyrs and many dangerous injuries. **It was clear that they aimed to shoot at very sensitive and dangerous areas in the body.** For example, the lower abdomen, kneecaps, neck, chest, and head, these were targets of their live ammunition. We tried to the best of our capabilities with what we have here in the village to save the situation, but what can we possibly do? Specifically, with what happened to our martyr here, the poor martyr, we couldn’t help him, they completely refused to allow the ambulance to move or anyone near it. **For over two hours, his injury and bleeding could have been stopped. But he became a martyr because they wouldn’t allow anyone to help, even us, as nurses and medics, to try and help him, they wouldn’t allow us near the ambulance. They started firing at us. Even the simplest form of aid and help, they forbade us from doing. I mean, more than this injustice and genocidal tendencies, they have not and will not let us move the smallest of steps to help our people. We have seen it all. It is a battlefield that we witnessed for the past week. A battlefield with over 72 injuries in one go.** Even the funeral for the martyr was attacked. When they finally allowed the martyr’s corpse to
enter the village, they prohibited everyone from walking with the corpse to the burial ground. Even the men who were holding the coffin were stopped. They fired at the funeral itself. Even in the funeral we had injuries. During the funeral, settlers attacked and fired at mourners. It was a second attack by the settlers, where they stormed the village. They burned homes yet again, and were actually more aggressive in the second attack than the first one on Friday. They barely got the chance to bury the martyr. As soon as he was buried, the young men of the village went to protect and defend the village as much as they possibly can from the settlers. At least try to do the bare minimum and protect the community from the attacks of settlers. And at the moment, honestly, what we are living in is extremely difficult and we do not have protection, even health centers are no longer secure, which is supposed to be the safest of places for us in the medical field and for those who are injured. Nowhere is safe anymore. We are supposed to be a hub for safety and health. We ourselves are now riddled with fear to do our jobs safely and securely. There is no safety.

**Tamam:** Last question Nida, because Nida has to go back to the clinic quickly. She is the only one working there today. When they burned the houses and cars what type of wounds and injuries did you see? What did you witness?

**Nida:** Children, women, and men, all of them had extreme third-degree burns. The flammable liquid they were using is something I’ve never seen before. It would burn everything and anything extremely quickly. It would spread on the body so unimaginably quickly. It was not normal, not natural at all. We couldn’t keep up, who do we help first, the child? The women? I mean, we saw the most extreme type of wounds we have seen in our lives. The flammable liquid they used was unbearably effective and quick, and it would burn everything in its sight. If you could have only seen how quickly it burned down houses, their metal door, its rock walls… It would melt and explode everything. It was not natural, I do not know what this liquid was that they were throwing on everything within the village.

**Within seconds, everything was up in flames.** Houses, cars, farming fields, human flesh… the poor people, we barely were able to hold the child and rush him/her to safety, or at least move them away from the fire, he/she would already have burn injuries. This liquid is terrifying, honestly, I am quite sure it is illegal globally. We have never witnessed anything like this before. Extreme injuries we have never witnessed before, but now we have here in Al Mughayyir. We never expected anything like this. Even the injured, the poor injured, on top of having a bullet wound, when we would try to treat the bullet wound, you see that his/her skin is also burned. It becomes a bullet and a burn wound. The injured no longer has one wounded area, instead it becomes the whole body that is injured. Honestly, the things we have witnessed are terrifying, how quickly it spreads all over the body. There is no quick cure, it needs time and many medical tools that we do not have access to. Our tools and capacities are simple, we do not have what we need for extreme attacks like these. We are a medical clinic and all we have is Poldine, gauze, these are the only things we have. What can we do with such simple tools? How can we attend to the wounded? Even the medications and ointments that we usually have for burns have run out in our clinic. We personally go to the pharmacy and buy more, even the simplest of medications and ointments, just to stabilize the wounded until they can reach the hospital or even leave the ambulance. These are the simple capacities we have. This is all we can offer. More than this we can not offer, although we have asked many to help us receive more medical supplies. It is the least that can be done. We are in need of emergency tools and supplies to be fully stocked so that we can at least offer the bare minimum medical
assistance. Medical assistance to those who cannot leave, or when we are banned from leaving the village by the Israelis. So that we do not feel helpless, so we can help even in the most basic sense. I hope for all parties that can offer us the bare necessities, medical supplies for extreme burns and bullet wounds, so if and when such violence reoccurs we can offer proper medical assistance. Just so we can offer some assurance to our community, specifically when they close the village and don’t allow anyone to enter or leave for several hours at a time. We have the right to have the basic supplies and capacities to aid our people. We have the right to have medical aid, strategies of aid so we can do our job. Now we are standing, hands folded, ignored by everyone, unable to do our jobs properly. No one is helping or aiding us, this is not a solution. Everyone should have seen what we have and are suffering. What we are dealing with is a special case and this area is completely surrounded by settlers, when they lock down the village there is nothing we can do. We only have one ambulance from outside the village, and when any help tries to reach us, they are denied. And when the ambulance comes from the neighboring village, we still have to see if the Israelis will allow it to enter. The attacks start, we call the ambulance. The ambulance only comes after there is clearly someone injured, and that is not right due to our circumstances. We need an ambulance to be present before any injuries are reported. It has to be present so when people are injured we are already there to take action in the moment, to be able to be as helpful as possible. As you see, the circumstances we are living in on the ground in reality, well, there is no need to go into further detail or repeat ourselves. The image and reality is clear, there is no confusion or complexity. It is clearly colonial occupation violence. Me personally, in all honesty, I swear to God, me and we have been put in a position where we do not know what to do. How can we help? We see the injured bleed out in front of us and there is nothing we can do. We do and give the most we can. We have reached a point where we feel guilt, although there is nothing more we can do. I was able to help one person, but not the other. I do not have the capacity to help everyone. And yet, I feel guilty. What should I do? I hope the situation will get better, at least a little bit better. And as you saw today, another incident has happened. We can not predict when anything will happen and what the response will be. I have no clue what will happen in an hour or two, but we expect anything is possible at this point. We now expect the unexpected here in the village because we have seen the most aggressive pogroms. We expect new attacks and injuries, injuries like on the first day. I hope any organization sees what we are dealing with, to hear and see us, the least they can do is help us, to perceive us as people who have the right to this land, and should receive support. They [settlers] are burning our land. They do whatever they want to us and our land without consequences. But we will not leave our land no matter what. It is our land and we have every right to stay. No matter what horrific actions they do, we will not leave. I hope, God willing, that the situation will get better, and I hope that the situation won’t get worse. God willing, things will get better, and that we meet next time for a happy occasion, God willing. Thank you so much for all the work you do and for taking the time to be with us today.

Tamam: Thank you so much and hopefully we can help very soon. We know you are very busy so we won’t take more of your time. Thank you once again.

Nida: Thank you for your time and effort and having our voice reach the world. Thank you and we appreciate you. Hopefully our voice will reach every corner of the earth and that everyone witnesses what we are experiencing and they try to help. We just hope that we will not be ignored and left to fend on our own. God willing, things will get better. Thank you everyone.
Tamam: Ok that was Nida Naasan, the nurse at the village clinic. Next, we're going to have our farmer friend from. Oh. Sorry we're going to actually take the president or the head of the village council, Mr. Amin Abu Alia, who's joining us now. I'm seeing there is a question. I will add everyone's names to the chat, absolutely, with what they do or their title, their job title. I would like to welcome Mr. Ameen Abu Alia, who again is the head of the village council. Hello Mr. Ameen, you can speak in Arabic. We have a translator so you do not have to worry about speaking in English. Can you please elaborate on what happened last week, as a member of the village council. What did you all experience by the hands of the settlers, how many injured? How many days of aggression by settlers? How is the situation now? With the beginning of the genocide until now, how is Al Mughayyir village being attacked by the Israeli settlers? In general

Ameen: Hello everyone and welcome to Al Mughayyir. Of course, Al Mughayyir population is about 4000. We are 35KM NorthEast of Ramallah City. We are the Eastern end of the Ramallah Governorate. Our land reaches the Jordan Valley, and we are considered the last village that belongs to Ramallah Governorate. Our village has experienced such pogroms for many years, since the beginning of 1970s, and we would get attacked by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) soldiers. They tried to take control of the village and place an army camp on the land of our village. And it built an apartheid street on our land for settlers at the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s. And this road is 500M east of the village, splitting the land of the village. From that time, the treatment of Israelis towards us was and is very much matter of fact. They have tried multiple times, forcibly, using different strategies, to empty Al Mughayyir from its people, farmers, and farms, knowing well that this area is the food basket of our village. We rely on it 100% as the source of income and we are famous for grazing sheep, goats, and cows, as well as our farms, specifically seasonal farming. The area behind the settler road is our main source of income. Sadly the occupation forces know this and use it as a tactic. They used to take farmers captive, they would kick the farmers off their land. They would fine them extreme fines. They would confiscate or hold our sheep. In other words, over the years we have experienced multiple different types of attacks and aggressions. Even after the 2000s we were shocked to find a new settler cluster on land that belongs to the village. After that we were surprised by new advancements by the settlers, who have developed into establishing pastoral settlement clusters on our land. To the Israeli government, they see this as less costly land and more land for them to take over. A settler looks to live on top of any hill he chooses with 10-12 other settlers, and with their herds of sheep, not as a way to invest or a way of living, but a way for them to occupy and control more land. As far as the eye can see, they believe it is theirs. They started attacking our people directly and agitating farmers. They would corner the herds and agitate farmers as a way to harm farmers' income and life directly. They specifically targeted Bedouin communities and herders and farmers, people who rely completely on the land and farming in this area. When these areas became more and more difficult and costly to reach, it negatively impacted all Bedouins and farmers, beyond what they can handle. A farmer, an average citizen, a simple peasant. The land could not be replaced simply with different seeds and substitutions. For that reason many farmers had to do a career shift. They sold their herds and entered the workforce. And the farmer that had 500 goats is now down to 100 goats. And recently, they can not even herd their goats properly. They are not even allowed to take their goats from out of their pens. And of course all of these settler attacks take place with the Israeli occupation soldiers protecting the already armed settlers. They protect the settlers even though
they are the agitators and start the problems. They allow the settlers to attack Palestinian civilians with full aggressive force. Sadly the Israeli occupation soldiers see what is happening and detain the Palestinian civilian. The victim is detained while the harasser is protected. They are held captive until they pay an unreasonably expensive fine beyond their financial capacity. On October 7th, 2023, there was an attack of settlers on the village with the support of the IOF soldiers as they cut off the roads for the farmers and directly attacked farmers, barging into their simple homes. Their homes are tents, and the settlers set fire to their homes. In the middle of the night they would do this, and they would not let us at least put out the fire until the whole tent had burned down. When the settlers organize an attack, they end it by ensuring all entrances into our village are closed. This has forcibly displaced many of our farmers to live in neighboring villages, which leads to them leaving all their personal belongings where they are, in the hope that one day they can return. Sadly, the settlers then destroy and burn all of the personal belongings of our people. Seizing and burning everything in sight. Of course, all of these pogroms from the past few months have been conducted with the protection of IOF soldiers. The most famous attack was on the 12th of April, Friday. It was not the first attack or pogrom, nor the last. It is almost daily that they attack our village and farmers, yet it was one of the largest and most aggressive attacks. We see that on Friday it was a premeditated attack, although they say it wasn’t. They say the attack was because they had a missing young man, who they assumed we were involved in, but we highly doubted it. It is clear to us that they used that as an excuse to conduct what they have been planning for. To the point that we would notice that the settlers would be visited occasionally by leaders such as Ben Gvir and the likes of him who would encourage and incite the settlers for the past year to attack, burn, steal, and harm farmers with herds, to displace the people in the village. The occupation forces want to displace all of us and seize the land. Of course the consequence of Israeli officials encouraging settlers to do such was having around 20 to 50 to 100 settlers at a time run down our fields and streets and attack once a farmer, or his land, his family, his herds, his vehicles. Recently the number of settlers has dramatically increased. On Friday, it was 1500 settlers who barged into our village and burned everything in sight. Most, if not all, of the 1500 were armed with machine guns or a pistol. They acted as if they were looking for something lost but sadly the occupation forces entered with the settlers into the village and attempted to ease people by saying, ‘oh they do not want to attack the village, they are just looking for the missing person and they will not harm you or your belongings, just don’t move, don’t confront them and they will not harm you.’ The occupation forces even had closed down all entrances into the village. The main entrance was the only one left open, but they placed a checkpoint at the main entrance and stated that now Al Mughayyir is a closed military zone. During this period they did not allow anyone out or in except for the 1500 settlers. They spread all over the village in groups north, west, and east of the village. Each group would be made of around 50 – 100. And they started attacking our people directly and firing live ammunition at homes and people. They started with a house that has 14 residents, including the mother and father who are over 90 years old, who live with their kids and grandchildren. You know Fridays are our religious and family relaxing day, it’s the day all families unite. That is why so many people were in that home. Some lived there, other family members just came to visit, and they were surprised by a mob of armed settlers surrounding their home and firing live ammunition, injuring some members of the family. The martyr Jehad, may God rest his soul, was injured, of course when we went to try and save the family, we would be attacked by different mobs of settlers. But we were able to reach the family and take the injured, including the martyr, who at this point was only injured. We faced the occupation forces on our way out, who were shooting at anyone
moving within the village, including medics, who were also injured by IOF bullets. At this point of course we do not have ambulances or civil defense vehicles, so we were using our private cars to reach those impacted. They started setting fire to the houses, and second by second the injured were increasing as the fires were growing. The injuries grew in intensity. They were beyond our capability. We would place them in our private cars and try to take them to the hospital, but the injured were held captive at the western entrance of the village for over two hours. I was one of the people who used my car to transport the injured. I had two injured with me in the car. I was shocked when I reached the entrance to find that an injured fellow I dropped off at the ambulance at the entrance was still there an hour later, and they forbade me from bringing down the other two injured. They stopped the ambulance that was on the other side of the entrance to come take the injured. After a while they allowed only one ambulance to enter. It was the ambulance that anyways belongs to the village. Only this one ambulance was allowed to cross the checkpoint And since they wouldn’t allow for another ambulance, we had to fit nine injured people into one ambulance. At the same time, the soldiers were repeatedly screaming that no one is allowed to go with the injured people. I tried to ride next to the driver so I could be of some help, but they returned us and held us captive for another 30 minutes. They wouldn’t allow anyone to leave with the ambulance. We said okay at least let the doctor go, but they wouldn’t allow him. They forced him out of the ambulance and just kept the nine injured in the ambulance with the driver to bleed out on each other. By the time they finally allowed the ambulance to head towards the hospital, Jihad had bled out and died in the ambulance. May God rest his soul. He was injured and bleeding for at least two hours before we were able to have him reach the hospital. If it wasn’t for these two hours, he might have been still with us. The settlers also stole 120 sheep. They killed between 50 to 60 sheep all over the village. They tore and burned trees and houses, injured more than 70 people, some of which were children and women. Of course the point of all this is very evident to us in the village. They have one goal and that is to incite enough fear within us from their attacks that we abandon our homes and land. The location of the village might be of significance to them. They might have plans for the land that requires them to seize it. It is not clear what plans they have, except that they want us out. Two days after Friday the 12th, the Israeli border army entered the village, and told the families whose houses are on the outskirts of the village that Ben Gvir had come and has given them more weapons for them to attack us again, so it is best for you to leave the village now. Of course the people in the village ignored them and refused to leave the village. Our message as a village is that no matter the cost, we will be steadfast in our land. Because we, as Palestinians, consider our children and our olive trees to be equals. Our love for our children and our land is one and the same.

Tamam: Thank you Mr. Ameen and may God protect you. Our next speaker is Mr. Ghassan Abu Alia, who is a farmer and also a member of the agricultural cooperative. Hello Mr. Ghassan, how are you? As a farmer and a cooperative member, can you tell us what happened on Friday, and in general what you experience by the Israeli colonial forces?

Ghassan: As farmers we have and continue to face a series of attacks for extended periods of time. It started with inconveniencing us, as well as attacking us, chopping down our trees at the beginning of planting season, then continuously harassing us as we tended to our trees. They confiscated much of our land, and refuse us any access to our land. We are not even allowed to harvest our trees and fields. This is day-to-day, month-by-month. As our farming land dwindles down, the land that belongs to the
village went from thousands of dunums of farming land to only the area around our home. We now as a village went from thousands of dunums for farming and grazing to only a few kilometers. So these attacks and pogroms have been happening for a while, but in the past six months it has drastically increased and has become much more violent. They put up cameras to the point if anyone walks past the buildings, they are shot. The farmers with herds can no longer take them to graze. We can no longer access our olive trees. The past year, no one could protect their olive trees. We couldn’t harvest even a gram of olives. And we lost all the olives of the season because we were denied access to them. Secondly, we are forbidden from reaching our hillside land. We were not allowed to farm or prepare the land at all. They stated the only places we will be allowed are inside of the buildings and the roads of the village. Many herdsmen have been injured while herding or trying to harvest their olive trees. Many were injured as they were pruning their olive trees and trying to protect them. Again, these aggressions take place now daily, between settlers and occupation forces. We deal with extremely violent attacks. Some of these attacks have led to the death of farmers and their children as they try to harvest their olive trees. Farmers are injured, killed, forced off their land, their goats and sheep are confiscated. They confiscate their farming equipment. This is continuous harassment that aims at seizing the whole area of the village and expelling us from it. They do not want us to exist. To them, Palestinian existence is dangerous. It does not matter if it is a child or woman. Our existence here on this land and working this land is enough for them to harass, torture, and kill us. The IOF soldiers protect and aid settlers in these attacks. The soldiers say that this is their job, it is their job to protect settlers and not anyone else. They watch as settlers fire, hit, and burn the village and villagers. Although Palestinian citizens are the victim, the soldiers watch on and join the settlers to ensure their “protection”. It does not matter if it is a child or a woman. They will and have harmed them. This is a summary of my experience as a farmer in Al Mughayyir. These are the daily attacks and injustices we deal with.

Tamam: Thank you Mr. Ghassan. Can we ask you, as a Palestinian farmer, and part of the Al Mughayyir community, how and why are you so steadfast in your land? What is your, your children’s, and family’s relationship with the land? As a society as a whole, how do you not flee after so many attacks? How are you so steadfast even with all these aggressive attacks and pogroms? Aren’t you scared or worried by the settlers? As they try to confiscate your land, what makes you all stay put on your land?

Ghassan: I mean, everyone that witnessed what happened here on Friday and Saturday, watched a one-sided attack that looked like a war on civilians. We as civilians have no self defense mechanisms, except steadfastness. They knew that, and they still attacked and burned our homes. And whoever left their home to help others would be shot at. They even set homes on fire with children in them, fire at those saving the children, they would enter homes and shoot at them and set fire to the house from the inside. Me and my community’s and Palestinians in general relationship to the land is deeply rooted. I inherited this land from my grandfather and him from his grandfather and him from his forefathers and so on. It is rooted deeply within our genes, our hearts. It is a part of us. This is our home. There is nowhere else for us. We lovingly and persistently will stay on this land. We will not give up or give in to the stressors or to the settlers that came from different countries and have no connection to this land except a connection of control, occupation, and colonialism. Our roots are spread all over this land. We know every rock and every grain of dirt. We know every tree that has existed on this land for hundreds of years. If you were to ask any farmer, they have an intimate, reciprocal relationship with
every rock and the dirt, because they have known each other for multiple generations. They have offered each other love, care, and resilience. So no matter what, we are steadfast. We might be attacked another 100 times, but we will not leave our land. We know that the attacks are only going to become more aggressive. But we, as farmers, as people of this village, will not leave our land.

Tamam: Thank you Mr. Ghassan. Next Yasmeen El-Hasan, the International Advocacy Officer at UAWC.

Yasmeen: The intensity of Israeli settler colonial violence in every part of historic Palestine is occurring within the broader context of Israeli settler colonialism. Now, we know that settler colonialism is the elimination or forcible displacement of the indigenous population of a land and replacing them with a settler population. So, the basis of settler colonialism is land theft. It's all about the land. And that's what we keep hearing and what we keep experiencing. A settler colony as, the world has witnessed and we Palestinians have been experiencing for over seventy six years, a settler colony will do anything that it believes it will take to forcibly steal this land. That includes destroying it, exploiting it, and genociding its people. The Israeli expansion of its settler colonial enterprise in the West Bank is happening parallel to the Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. Within the West Bank, there are at least 759 Israeli-imposed movement obstacles. These restrict access to roads, communities, agricultural areas, urban areas, food markets, water sources, medical care, educational facilities, and necessary services. In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation destroyed all of this. And in the West Bank, the Israeli occupation is attempting to manufacture an isolation of Palestinian communities like Al Mughayyir. This targeting and disruption and destruction of Palestinian food systems and land is a tactical strategy of Israeli settler colonialism. It is attempting to sever the indigenous Palestinian relationship with the land and interdependence on the land, no matter the consequences, whether the consequences be humanitarian, like the tens of thousands of martyrs, or environmental, like the hundreds of thousands of metric tons of planet-warming emissions produced by Israel alone just in the past six months. Our struggle for food sovereignty is also necessarily interconnected with our struggle for national sovereignty and Palestinian self-determination. Now, we've been talking about the land. From our land comes our livelihood. Our livelihood is sustenance. So attacking the land is an attempt to take that away, which means Palestinians can't eat. So it is intentional that, when we talk, we talk about food sovereignty rather than food security. Food insecurity of any scale is not due to a lack of resources. This is human-made. Food insecurity is human-made. So if we had access to sovereignty over our natural resources and our land, Palestine would be food secure. The population in Gaza of 2.3 million, over half of whom are children, would not be facing starvation, and rural communities like Al Mughayyir would not be facing this hardship. This is human-made. By cutting off Palestinians in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from their livelihoods, inherently rooted in our land, the occupation is attempting to further the settler colonial project. And it's also critical to know that the Palestinian struggle is one of livelihoods and existence. They cannot be enumerated just by GDP or assured by talk of per capita growth; this is livelihood and existence. Our relationship with the land, as our colleague mentioned, it's not abstract. It's very material. It's physical. We are rooted in the land. It's not just a symbolic relationship, it's symbiotic. Reciprocal. And as indigenous people to this land, Palestinians are the caretakers. And we will continue to care for it.

Tamam: Thank you so much Yasmeen. So there's only one question I think it would be great if you answer it, and then we will have to close this conference a little bit early due to movement restrictions.
But it's been a question asked as follows: “How would you describe, or maybe even Moayyad could share his opinion on this as well, how would you describe the relationship between a settler and the army? Does the US sanctions have an impact on settlers?

Moayyad: From the seventh of October until now, the Israeli settlers do their attacks by using the Israeli army. Before the war, the Israeli settler cannot do a military checkpoint in front of the agricultural land or villages or rural area in general in the West Bank and Area C. Now we notice that settler Israeli settler settlement guards can now do a military checkpoint. They can inspect anyone in the street, stop you, and in minutes bring the Israeli police in any place in the West Bank, especially in the south of Nablus. The Israeli settler guards now act within the Israeli army and document with our activists who document the Israeli settler violations. Many cases that the Israeli settlers make the attack while dressed in army uniform. In Madama, Qusra, Burin, and Al Mughayyir. In the same time, after the war the Israeli military has claimed it is in an emergency situation and laws under war conditions. So now all settlers are also army members. For us and for the farmers, there is no differences between the Israeli settler or Israeli army. And they are act as army not as the settler because they are included in the army now. What we are phased in the last week from the 12th to the 16th, the army and settlers work in parallel as a protection for the settlers’ protection. At the beginning of the war, Ben Gvir armed more than thirty thousand Israeli settlers. It is not by chance they started to make like a parallel militia of settlers to make attack on the Palestinians. The last attack on the Palestinian, it's not by chance. It's not like a reaction, it's an organized terrorist attack, which is more than 1500 settlers. They invade twenty five Palestinian villages at the same time so this is making like it's not an Israeli citizen “civilian” who do that. They are armed and they are part of the Israeli army, and as our friend the nurse talking about, the injuries the Israeli settler used the army weapons and the army exclusive material that they are used to make like this a huge burns and fires inside the houses and the civilians didn't have that. So again there is no differences between the Israeli army and Israeli settler. And my colleague Yasmeen can talk about the impact of sanctions if there is an impact from sanctions.

Yasmeen: Thank you. So to address the other part of that question, the potential impact of US sanctions, or the role of the US generally first of all. I'll say that there are many many actors within the global and international community who are not only complicit but actively participating in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians and the Israeli settler colonialism of Palestine. And that includes especially the United States, which is funding the genocide, the bombs that are falling on Gaza, the weapons that are killing and hurting children here in Al Mughayyir. These are US-funded. The US and a number of a few other countries have recently, within the past months, imposed sanctions on some individual settlers. Now these sanctions, first of all, are too little too late. Second of all, it individualizes a problem that is a systemic problem. It does not talk to or or address the problem at the root, which is settler colonialism, occupation. Rather, it points to a handful of settlers and makes the problem out to be as though it is in those individuals. That is not what has happened. There's a metaphor I like to use, particularly about this type of dynamic where some international actors will build the apartheid wall, and then give us paint to draw on it. But they built the wall – what good is the paint? We don't want to beautify it. We want it to be down. And so similarly here, if the US, for example, or other international actors, countries, states, actual action would address the core and the root of the problem. There should be arms embargoes, there should be sanctions not on individuals only but on the Israeli occupation as a
whole, illegal settlements there should be a divestment from Israeli occupation goods, settlements within the West Bank which are under international law illegal. By sanctioning only a few individuals, the US is, particularly with the elections upcoming, is trying to assuage the growing unrest within the American population which, more than ever, is now seeing that the US government is not acting in the will of the people, and the US government is actively participating in this genocide.

Tamam: Okay so before we close up and we have to kind of rush with the way the roads are looking, I'd like to ask if anyone has any final comments or calls they'd like to say. Mr. Ghassan, any final comments?

Ghassan: We are in need of support and basic needs urgently to ensure our steadfastness as farmers. To compensate for what they have lost from these attacks so they can build up again from now below zero grounding. Because now that everything has been seized or burned down, they need to start over. They have no work and no home. No clothing or even basic necessities for their children. They escaped the fires without any of their belongings. So this is a priority. At least partial aid so they can survive, provide partial aid to farmers for tools. As farmers we lost most of our farmer equipment and herds. And animal feed. Some people have lost their home and their livelihood This can be a start to at least aid us with the primary basic needs. That will help us survive on our land. To allow them to return to their somewhat normal daily lives. To how they lived before these attacks. And thank you. Thank you so much for your time.

Moayyad: According to me this is an important conference to all our friends, journalists, who have heard about the situation here in Al Mughayyir and in other villages which are under attack. We are doing this conference from Al Mughayyir, and the Israeli settler and army are starting to invade as we speak on Al Mughayyir. They are on the eastern side of the village now, and this is a message that the people should not be silenced, more and more should be talking about these criminals against Palestinians. Also yesterday, the Israeli minister of finance announced that they will legitimize another 23 Israeli outposts in the West Bank. This is a reaction that the American or EU sanctions on the settlers is nothing and it's meaningless, because if there is a sanction over them, we cannot see that. This is a huge and organized attack over the Palestinian and this is a message that as we are a national agricultural organization, that we continue us receiving the donation and the support to our farmers and to support their steadfastness. Because now, the situation is very very complex and Israel continue with the starvation war, not only on Gaza, also in Palestine and West Bank because prohibiting the Palestinian to enter and to access to their land meaning that the Israelis want to start them and they become like consumer of humanitarian aid instead of producing their own food. Thank you so much.

Tamam: Our final call will be from Yasmeen and then this conference will be done. Again, if you need to contact us, if you have any questions, we have shared our emails for both Yasmeen and Moayyad, emails in the chat, as well as the name of every speaker on this panel. Yasmeen.

Yasmeen: Thank you. So echoing what my friends have said, and what Moayyad had just mentioned about UAWC, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), our work on the support the steadfastness of our farmers and communities. Following the breakout of the Israeli genocidal war in October 2023, UAWC launched a community aid campaign ‘Stop Gaza Starvation’ to address the
immediate needs of our communities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Since then, in the campaign we have been making amazing strides thanks to the steadfastness and resilience and strength of our colleagues in Gaza who are working under unimaginable danger in order to redistribute goods and keep our communities alive. We've distributed at least 96,975 beneficiaries have received essential aid and this includes food parcels, hygiene and sanitary products, mattresses, blankets and firewood. Additionally at least 172,000 people have received drinking water. We are working currently on the rehabilitation of water wells to provide clean drinking water, we're working on rehabilitation of sanitary facilities, and rehabilitation of land, so returning to producing food from the land. As the conditions in the Gaza Strip and Area ‘C’ of the West Bank continue to rapidly decline, we as UAWC and all of our community here, we call upon, the global community to support grassroots Palestinian efforts and contribute to this community aid campaign as we work to strengthen the steadfastness of our communities. And as Tamam mentioned, you can find more information and the donation link on our website. Broadly speaking, Palestine and Palestinians call upon people of conscience all around the world. Stand for justice. Protest. Commit to BDS. Boycott, divest, sanction. Disrupt the status quo. Let the world know that our struggle is one. Our liberation is collective. And through that struggle and collective liberation, Palestine will be free. The millions and millions in the streets all over the world, here from Palestine, we see you. The student movements at the universities all across the world, those passing divestment proposals, we see you. The students at Columbia University who are engaging in historic organizing right now, we see you. Youth and elders standing for justice, other marginalized, colonized, oppressed communities – we see you. Collectively, we are refusing to allow this to be normal, and we are standing together. And we stand with you too. We are standing in the midst of a catastrophe that is human-made and of an unimaginable scale. But we are a steadfast people. And we care for our land, and we care for each other. And we will continue to do so until and after liberation. Thank you.

Tamam: Thank you. Everyone so much for attending our conference, again if you have any questions you can find our emails in the chat, as well as someone had asked for the names of everyone on the panel, you can find them in the chat, full name and job, so that has also been shared in the chat. We look forward to hearing from you if you have any further questions. We hope everyone has a great day. Thank you again.