



The Conditions of Palestinian Farmers and Rural Communities in the West Bank Amid Escalating Israeli Settler Violence and Ethnic Cleansing

La Via Campesina and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) stand firmly with Palestinian farmers, herders, and rural communities, who are enduring an unprecedented onslaught of Israeli settler violence, land theft, and destruction in the West Bank of Palestine. As the Israeli occupation continues to carry out its genocidal war in the Gaza Strip, it has intensified the same systems of colonial oppression in the West Bank, designed to uproot Palestinians, erase their presence, and dismantle their livelihoods. While the Israeli Occupation's tactics vary in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, both regions are facing manifestations of active settler colonialism aimed at ethnically cleansing the indigenous Palestinians from their lands.

Before the Israeli genocidal war began on 7 October 2023, Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians had already skyrocketed, and the beginning of the genocide marked an [even greater uptick](#). With the financial and ideological support of the occupation, Israeli settlers were emboldened to intensify their attacks on Palestinian communities, acting as an extension of the settler colonial entity. Between 7 October 2023 and 30 September 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [recorded](#) approximately 1,423 violent attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank that caused Palestinian fatalities, property damage, or both. Of these attacks, over 120 led to Palestinian fatalities and injuries, while approximately 1,135 resulted in extensive damage to Palestinian property, including homes, farmland, livestock, and agricultural equipment. More than 148 incidents involved both casualties and property damage. As stewards of the land, Palestinian farmers experience heightened levels of colonial marginalization, as Israeli settlers often specifically [target](#) rural and agricultural communities.

These attacks are not isolated incidents but part and parcel of the systematic, state-sanctioned campaign of ethnic cleansing. Israeli settlers, backed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF), have for decades been seizing Palestinian land and resources, pushing communities off their land to make way for settlement expansion. Over the past year, the rate of Israeli land theft and settlement expansion has increased exponentially, with the Israeli government [allocating](#) about 1.3 billion USD to settlement expansion in 2024 alone, with even more budgeted for the upcoming year. In December 2023, the Ministry of Settlements [allocated](#) around 20.5 million USD for what it refers to as “young settlements” – that is, small settler outposts that are not yet authorized by the Israeli government, but that it hopes to grow. In July 2024, just two months ago, the Israeli government [approved](#) the largest seizure of Palestinian land in the West Bank in over 30 years. By doing so, it gave the green light to 5,295 new housing units across the West Bank and recognized three new



settlement outposts. New settler outposts continue to be established with direct IOF protection, which will contribute to the forced displacement of even more Palestinians. This is an ongoing, internationally funded settler colonial project, designed to eradicate Palestinian existence on the land. Since October 2023, settler violence has displaced at least 277 Palestinian households in the West Bank, comprising 1,628 people, including 794 children. Entire families have lost their homes, agricultural structures, and livestock, and some have been displaced multiple times. These are deliberate acts of ethnic cleansing aimed at erasing Palestinian communities, cutting them off from their land, and making their return impossible.

This is settler colonialism in action.

Along with the constant violence of the Israeli occupation forces, ongoing Israeli military lockdown of the West Bank, and imposition of at least 793 movement obstacles, these settler attacks systematically disenfranchise Palestinians and violently prevent rural communities from harvesting or even reaching their land. By devastating land, homes, and vital infrastructure, these attacks not only endanger lives but threaten Palestinian livelihoods. Israeli settler attacks strategically target '[Area C](#)', which is the largest and most fertile part of the West Bank, and the prime target of Israeli settler expansion. As the historic food basket of the West Bank, the land labeled as 'Area C' is critical to Palestinian livelihoods, agriculture, herding, and food systems.

The annual olive harvest, a cornerstone of Palestinian livelihood and heritage, approaches in just one month. With settler attacks on the rise, road closures, and the continuous theft of land, farmers are left in an untenable situation, unable to safely tend to their fields or harvest their crops. In the last olive harvest in 2023, a majority of olives went unharvested due to Israeli oppressive measures. The violence, land theft, and settlement expansion are part of a broader strategy of dispossession that threatens the very survival of Palestinian rural communities. These are calculated moves to sever Palestinians' connection to their land and obliterate their food sovereignty.



Some of the most recent incidents of Israeli settler violence towards Palestinian farmers, as recorded by OCHA, highlight the brutality of this campaign:

- On 12 August 2024, settlers from a newly established outpost near Artas, Bethlehem, abducted two 15-year-old Palestinian boys while they were herding sheep. The settlers held knives to the boys' throats, brutally beat them, broke their legs, urinated on them, and abandoned them handcuffed in a remote area.
- On 15 August 2024, more than 100 settlers from the Gilad Farm settlement launched a coordinated attack on Jit village, Qalqiliya. Armed with firearms, Molotov cocktails, and stones, they set Palestinian homes and vehicles on fire, killing one Palestinian man.
- On 16 August 2024, armed settlers and the IOF assaulted two Palestinian shepherds in Kafr ad Dik, Salfit, threatening them with death if they did not abandon their land. Five shepherds were arrested, and two were seriously injured while in Israeli custody, enduring physical abuse for two days.
- On 20 August 2024, settlers from the Rosh Ha'Ayin settlement set fire to an agricultural structure in Az Zawiya village, destroying farming equipment, water tanks, crops, and killing 25 chickens. This attack not only destroyed essential food resources but also left threatening messages to further intimidate the farmer.
- On 25 August 2024, Israeli settlers attacked and injured four Palestinians in Al Buwieb village, Hebron. Armed settlers, after attempting to steal livestock, returned with reinforcements and violently attacked two Palestinian families. While the IOF detained the Palestinian victims, the settlers looted vital farming equipment, including an electric generator and a fridge used for milk production. These families had only recently returned to their homes after being displaced by earlier violence.
- On 31 August 2024, settlers from the Migdalim settlement, alongside IOF soldiers, attacked Qusra village in Nablus. The settlers threw stones at Palestinian homes and vandalized water meters essential for agricultural irrigation. When Palestinian villagers defended their homes, the IOF fired live ammunition and tear gas at them, injuring ten people, including a child.
- On 2 September 2024, settlers from the Itamar Kahan settlement physically assaulted a Palestinian herder in the Tell al Khashaba herding community and stole 230 sheep, decimating the herder's livelihood.



These incidents are just a glimpse of the daily terror that Israeli settlers – protected and accompanied by the IOF – inflict upon Palestinian communities. Every attack, every theft of land, and every act of violence is part of the broader plan to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from the West Bank and erase their history, culture, and future.

Despite that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has [determined](#) the occupation of the West Bank illegal under international law, the settler colonial violence only intensifies. The international community must not stand by in silence. We call for immediate, decisive action to protect Palestinian farmers and herders and hold the Israeli Occupation accountable for its violations of international law.

End the violence. End the occupation. Protect Palestinian farmers and Palestinian land.