

# THE JORDAN VALLEY UNDER OCCUPATION

Palestinian Grassroots  
Anti-Apartheid  
Wall Campaign

## Colonization, isolation and expulsion

The Jordan Valley has always been a central rural backdrop to the urban areas of Palestine in the central West Bank. Bar the city of Jericho, the climate of the Jordan Valley means the area has a rich history of agricultural production. Moreover, it is renowned as a site of natural beauty with a famous legacy of tourism.

When Palestine came under British colonial control, authorities neglected the area; the only infrastructure built being the military road (Road n. 90) and a large prison to the north. The Valley was the military area that allowed control over Palestinian borders.

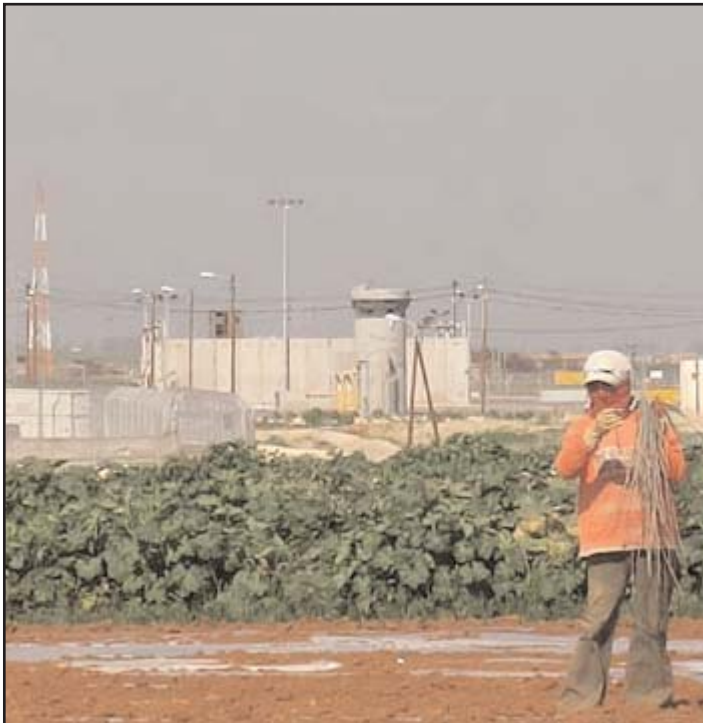
During the Jordanian period, agricultural development took off on a larger scale. Farmers produced crops along the banks of the Jordan River that were sold across the Arab World. This stopped abruptly with the Occupation from 1967. Today the expanding settlements, their Apartheid infrastructure and the Wall threaten all remaining Palestinian life in the Valley.

### Geography of the Valley

The Jordan Valley area - making up almost 30% of the West Bank's territory - extends from the Dead Sea in the South until Bisan in the North, from the Jordan River in the East to the mountains which slope down the West Bank.

Out of the 2400 km<sup>2</sup> territory of the Valley, 1200km<sup>2</sup> are controlled by Zionist settlements. 46% of the total land mass is usurped by Occupation military zones leaving just 4% of the Valley accessible to Palestinians for agricultural or residential use.

52,000 Palestinians live permanently in the Valley, with other land-owners residing in towns throughout the West Bank. Many other Palestinians settle in the Valley on a seasonal basis, moving down from the mountains to the West to cultivate their lands and graze herds. Meanwhile, residential areas are concentrated in Jericho, 24 villages and dozens of Bedouin communities.



Above: A typical scene in Palestine, farming in the shadow of the Wall.

The Valley is composed of three areas:

**The North**, including Bardala, Ein al Beida, Kardala and Al Maleh, Many land-owners come from Tobas, Tammoun and Tayasseer (Jenin district) to their fields here.

**Central Valley**, including Jiftlik, Marnerjeh, Zbeidat, Marjghazal and Frush Beit Dajan. Many land-owners are from Nablus, Al Badan, Fara', Aqraba, Beit Furiq and Beit Dajan (Nablus district).

**The South**, including Fassayel, Al Awja, Jericho, Diuk and Nu'ame, and Bedouin communities in al Khan el Ahmar and Nabi Musa. Other land-owners reside in Ramallah and Jerusalem districts. 80% of the territory in the Southern Jordan Valley has been "state" land under Ottoman, British and Jordanian rule. Today it is usurped by the Occupation.

Below:  
The Valley Under Siege



### Land Grab and Colonization since 67

Immediately after the Occupation of the Jordan Valley in 1967, Zionist authorities declared the whole region a closed military area. Like today, the Valley was closed off with only Jordan Valley "residents" allowed to cross the checkpoints between 6am-9pm.

Entire populations of al-Himma, as- Sakut, Deir,, al Qa'un, Ein as-Sultan and the camp of Abu al-Jaj were expelled from their lands.

Around 650 km<sup>2</sup> of land was confiscated and fenced off in the area immediately parallel to the River Jordan, resulting in the displacement and expulsion of thousands of people.

Tens of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land west of the fence was closed off. Since almost all fertile and irrigated lands are in close range from the river, Palestinian agriculture became severely hit. Shepherds whose communities had used the lands for centuries were cut off from grazing their cattle.

The once flourishing tourism in Wadi al Maleh hot springs came to an end as the area was declared a military zone.

## The Apartheid Wall

The Wall in the area extends from the River Jordan in the East until al-Mattalli village (Jenin district) to the West. Here it isolates 4000 dunums of Bardala's land without even the gates found in other stretches of the Wall that maintain the façade of Palestinian access to annexed land.

Running 8km west of Tamoun, between Tubas and Beit Dajan, a 5km long trench system has been dug to bar Palestinians from their farmland in Sahel Libqe'a.

The isolation of the Jordan Valley is overseen through 5 major checkpoints - open between 6am and 9pm - that control the main roads from and to the Valley.

1. Checkpoint Tayasser isolates the northern Jordan Valley from Tobas road
2. al Hamra checkpoint isolates the Jordan Valley from the road to Nablus.
3. Checkpoint Ma'ale Efraim isolates the road to Salfit.
4. al Awja checkpoint isolates the road to Ramallah.
5. Bardala checkpoint blocks access to Bisan and the 1948 areas of Palestine.

Since October 2005, Bardala checkpoint has been closed to Palestinians and their goods. Since 2002, only Palestinians with official residency in the Jordan Valley (as displayed on the ID system the Occupation imposes) are allowed to cross the checkpoints to the rest of the West Bank.

Since the beginning of April 2006, only Palestinians with Jordan Valley residency, and over the age of 30 years, are allowed to cross these checkpoints.

This has led to the complete isolation of the Valley's population as they were severed from the urban centers of the West Bank, their markets, their institutions and basic social services.

## Housing and Living Conditions

Since 1967, the Palestinian population was prohibited from building and restructuring their buildings. After Oslo, the area for Palestinian residential use was limited to 11km<sup>2</sup>, some 0.5% of the Jordan Valley.

Only Jericho and al Awje were considered Area A and Bardala, Ein el Beida, Marjnaji, Zubeidat, Fassayel as Area B.

The restrictions on Palestinian housing do not take into consideration the natural population growth of the area. Over the last 40 years overcrowding has become a major problem as the population in the enclosed Palestinian areas has grown.

All Palestinian communities outside this restricted space have been subjected to frequent house demolitions. In 2005 alone, 22 houses were destroyed by the Occupation.

With the exception of Jericho, no Palestinian telecommunication or landlines are permitted. Palestinians, outside areas A and B are not allowed to link their villages and housing with services or to build houses, hospitals or schools. Some Palestinian communities are still left without even the most basic services such as water and electricity. Jiftlik, the largest village after Jericho and al Awja, is without electricity, while the Original Fassayel and Marjnaje are without drinking water.

## Water Rights

Within the closed military area along the Jordan River, 162 agricultural water projects developed during Jordanian rule have not been accessible for Palestinians since 1967, depriving thousands of people their livelihoods.

Moreover, the Occupation has gradually implemented a series of policies to create extreme water shortages for the Palestinian population.

Since 1967, Palestinians have been barred from their share of the Jordan River water (250 million m<sup>3</sup> per year), while the Occupation systematically exceeds their share to the profit of the settlements. Other crimes committed by the Occupation include:

The monopolization of digging and maintenance of wells for the company *Mekarot* with Palestinians prohibited from digging any further wells or restructuring existing wells.

Situation of new Jewish-only wells near Palestinian springs, so the Palestinian wells further away from the spring dry out or lose much of their water. The Occupation wells are often between 500-1200m deep and thus drain the water from smaller Palestinian wells, while at the same time threatening the entire water basin as they exceed the maximum depth ecologically sustainable in the area.

Threatening of the eco-system of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. the Occupation built two large water reservoirs in 2002 (800 000 and 2,800 000 m<sup>2</sup>) and hundreds of water tanks (until 3000 m<sup>3</sup>) to drain water from the springs and seasonal rivers that flow into the river and the sea during Winter.

Declaration of areas with strategic water resources along the mountains as military zones. Most water rich Palestinian wells are located in these areas and remain unusable with communities unable to access them.

Deliberate pollution of Palestinian water resources, such as Ein Wadi el Qult and a well in Zbeidat area, by sewage water coming from the settlements.

**Case Study 1.** In Bardala, two big wells (Bardala 1 and Bardala 2) pull 2000m<sup>3</sup> of water per hour, resulting in older Palestinian wells (dug before 67) drying out.

**Case Study 2.** At al Fara' springs, the Occupation has dug many wells from the feeding area resulting in its current dilapidated state.



## Agriculture and Markets

Palestinian agriculture has also been systematically attacked since 1967.

Agriculture along the River Jordan was completely destroyed and markets to the Arab world cut off.

Over the years, the Valley's agriculture sector has been forced to accept the Israeli economy as their main export partner in a way that has fostered dependency and further colonization.

An economic system of exploitation puts the farmers of the Valley under a tight stranglehold.

Subsidized settlement products and the practice of "dumping" goods on Palestinian markets severely threaten

Palestinian agriculture, already suffering from an imposed shortage of water and necessary infrastructure. Since the beginning of this Intifada, the Occupation has also blocked the usage of the most convenient fertilizers and pesticides and blocks seed imports for long periods at checkpoints. This limits the kind of cultivation in the area, the space of land that can be cultivated and income.

Markets for the Jordan Valley agricultural production have been systematically cut off. In the West Bank - Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah, Jericho, Jerusalem and Hebron - are accessed with severe difficulty as checkpoints block all main roads. Markets within the '48 territories have been severed over a gradual process. First, a test and quota system limited the amount of produce that could pass Bardala checkpoint. Now the checkpoint is completely closed with the Occupation only willing to reopen it if Palestinian farmers agree to collaborate with the settlers and pay the colonists to pack and process the products, Palestinian farmers have collectively refused this dirty deal, but the pressures upon them are growing on all sides.

Palestinian workers (without Jordan Valley residency) are not allowed to reach their workplaces within the Valley anymore. The only way to still gain a permit and work is employment in the settlements.

Land-owners are not allowed to reach their lands if their residency is outside the Valley.

Markets are closed to Palestinian products while the Occupation offers "joint" ventures and "cooperation" deals with the settlers to create dependency and break the autonomy of Palestinian farmers.

Palestinians are compelled to buy expensive water from the Occupation and its state run company *Mekorot*.

**Below 1:** Palestinians living, working and schooling in tents because of the racist Occupation policies which prevent construction. **Below 2:** Palestinians regularly have their houses and properties destroyed.



### Boycott Carmel Agrexco

Last year the Occupation launched a huge "development project" to expand the settlements and their farms in the Jordan Valley.

Companies like *Carmel Agrexco* (of which the Occupation directly own 75%) are key players in this expansionist project and make enormous profits from settler-production. The majority of their goods come from the Jordan Valley, being transported from packing houses in the Valley to European markets in 24 hours. With distribution depots in most countries in Europe - including major supermarket chains - international support for Occupation exports sustains the mechanisms that create devastation for Palestinians.

While Palestinian agriculture and livelihoods are being destroyed - undermining the existence of villages and farms throughout the Valley - the need for a strong and coordinated boycott becomes more vital than ever.

## Health & Education

In al Jiftlik, school has to be held in a tent, as any construction is prohibited.

Existing schools in the Jordan Valley are overcrowded and lacking sufficient class rooms, with students often travelling for several hours to reach them.

Except Jericho, the entire Valley suffers from a lack of basic health services. No emergency services are possible and just 5 villages in the area receive clinic services for an hour 2 days a week.



## Settlements

In 1968, Mahola, the first settlement in the Valley was established on Ein al Beida's land under the pretext of the absentee property law that enables the confiscation of refugee property. Today 6,200 settlers man 36 colonies.

The Occupation offers a discount of 75% for drinking water, electricity, telecommunication and transportation, as well as free irrigation water and free education for every settler in the Jordan Valley.

Every settler family is given 70 dunums of stolen Palestinian land and 1000 NIS as a long-term loan. Although, the Occupation offers enormous incentives for the settlers, their number has decreased in recent years.

However, despite this decrease, colonization of Palestinian land has continued unabated. The Occupation gives away large parts of the military zone areas to new settler agricultural farms. Land is being cultivated by settlers on the banks of the river and a few months ago the area with electricity. Millions of dollars are pumped into the Valley as the settlements expand and swallow remaining Palestinian life.

**Above:** Palestinian children are forced to receive schooling in tents due to the racist policies of the Occupation which prevent the construction of basic infrastructure.

**Right:** Palestinian produce for sale in the Jordan Valley. These shops come under regular attack by Occupation Forces who try to coerce Palestinians into dependency on the colonists in the Valley for exporting produce.



## Support our struggle for existence in the Jordan Valley

- Stand with our struggle for National Liberation!
- Boycott, divestments and Sanctions against Apartheid Israel

[www.stophewall.org](http://www.stophewall.org)

**Palestinian Grassroots  
Anti-Apartheid  
Wall Campaign**

Initiatives to boycott, sanction and divest from Israeli Apartheid are growing across the world.

Support the Jordan Valley by breaking the support for the Occupation's industries and agricultural products.

For more information email [mobilize@stophewall.org](mailto:mobilize@stophewall.org)

