

Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

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

## DEFENDING PALESTINIAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AGAINST OCCUPATION AND EXPULSION



Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production."

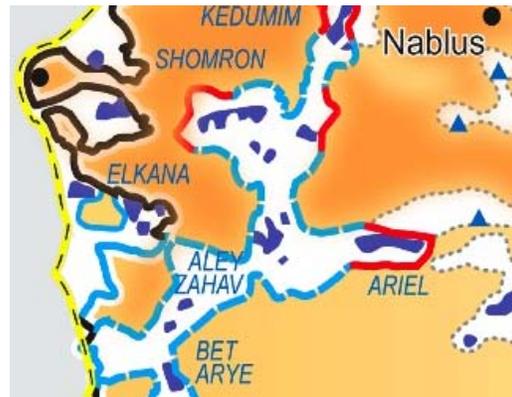
-"Statement on People's Food Sovereignty" by Via Campesina

## Destruction of farming communities

A fast-paced and parallel process of land confiscation and tightly sealed ghettos by means such as the 8m high Apartheid Wall, **with no ability to move physically or have economic trade and a flow of goods**, is a reality for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This policy seeks once and for all to ensure that Palestinian communities are unable to sustain themselves, paving the final path towards Palestinian transfer.

## Ongoing Land Theft and Expulsion since 1948

In 1950 the Government passed the Absentee Property Law, which defined all those who were expelled, fled, or left the country between 1948 and 1952 as "absentees" and their property as "absentee property." The lands and properties of the refugees and internally displaced persons were confiscated, transferred to an ad hoc custodian, and eventually used for the purposes of Jewish settlement. One in three Palestinians who remained in areas under Israeli control, even if they became citizens of the State, were classified as "present absentees" and prevented from re-claiming their land.



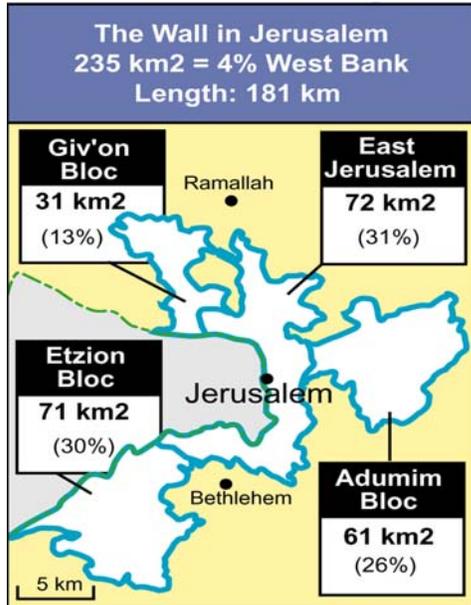
In the Ariel finger for instance, the Wall has cut through one of the most farmable areas of the West Bank. The broken blue line represents the approved projection of the Wall

Land theft remains a part of Israel's policy to expel the Palestinian people. While in the Naqab and the Galilee Israeli planning, land use, resource allocation, institutional and political practices serve to hide the theft of land and continuous ethnic cleansing, in the West Bank the land grab is less hidden and more pervasive. The Apartheid Wall seals the destruction of most of Palestinian farming communities that see their land isolated behind cement walls and razor wire. **Some 50% of the West Bank land is being stolen for Zionist colonization and the ghettoization of the Palestinians imprisoned within the Wall.**

Nearly 60 years have passed since the Israeli occupation successfully stole the Palestinian name "Jaffa", along with the city, for the economic and policy interests it provides. Today the "Israeli" name - a colonial brand that continues to thrive in the 21st century - is present worldwide in supermarkets and households on produce from stolen Palestinian land (and labor). In this way, we see the link between the 1948 expulsion and takeover of Palestinian lands, the establishment of agricultural settlements in the 1967 occupied areas, the annexation of the lands of nearly 300 villages for the Apartheid Wall, the suffocating closure of Gaza as produce rots away at sealed "crossings", and the signing of peace and agricultural agreements for a thriving Israeli agro-industry.

## Inability to market Palestinian products

Palestinian markets and access to those markets have been completely destroyed.



For centuries, Jerusalem has been the hub for cultural, political and commercial activity in Palestine, and later in the West Bank and Gaza. A large regional market of Palestinian agricultural goods depended on the city. Today, Palestinian greengrocers and markets in Jerusalem are not legally allowed to sell any Palestinian produce, including agricultural products both plant and animal, without a proper license from the Occupation authorities. Checkpoints and the Wall isolating Jerusalem bar people from passing any food and agricultural produce to Jerusalem. Personnel from the Occupation forces in Jerusalem have frequently waged raids against vegetable and fruit peddlers. Agricultural products are either destroyed in front of farmers' eyes or confiscated, and in many cases farmers are charged with high

fines. The destruction of this core market is part of the wider Zionist policies of ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem and all of Palestine.

Nablus, like all other cities in the West Bank, is choked by checkpoints and road blocks. Historically, the city not only produced and exported industrial products but was also an important food market for the region. To destroy this market at the core of the northern West Bank, it has been completely cut off from its surroundings since this Intifada. Today the markets in Nablus have to integrate the agricultural produce arriving with Israeli goods in order to feed the local population.

**The checkpoints, choking all major cities as well as agricultural villages,** ensure Palestinian produce is systematically stopped, sent back or left to rot while the products cultivated by the colonizers on stolen land pass smoothly through the checkpoints and along the Jewish-only roads.

The **Jordan Valley**, which is an area for the Occupation's agro-industrial development projects, has been **completely sealed off from the rest of the West Bank** for a year while Zionist settlements expand on Palestinian land.

Since 1967 Palestinians are only permitted to farm and use lands that lie within a close radius to built up areas. Since 1983, a sophisticated network of Jewish-only roads, checkpoints, permit restrictions and trenches ensure that no Palestinian without official residence in the Jordan Valley – no truck drivers, no merchants - can cross to the Valley. Goods that are destined to leave or enter the Valley are highly restricted and monitored.

The passage of goods (let alone people) from Gaza to the West Bank has been almost completely cut off since the beginning of this Intifada. Sales from the West Bank and Gaza to the rest of Palestine undergo so-called “security” processes that de facto ensure fresh goods are not tradable.

### Prevention of import/export

While internal markets are destroyed, export of Palestinian products relies upon the enslavement of the Palestinian farmers to Israeli companies.

In the West Bank, exporting “Made in Palestine” through Occupation checkpoints, authorities and processes and rules is hardly an option for any farmer’s fresh produce. Long delays in hygienic test centers, ports, packaging houses and customs offices and the careless unpacking of fruits and vegetables for “security” reasons ensure that Palestinian goods are not able to leave the country in good quality.

**Farmers are thus compelled to hand over their produce to the Israeli State** owned company Agrexco and other Israeli exporters that sell the “Israeli products” in the world markets. Prices, conditions, amount and type of produce are all dictated to farmers who have little choice other than to accept the exploitation by the Occupation’s companies.



The sealing of the Gaza Strip has devastated the 1.37 million Palestinians living there, 60% of who now live below the poverty line.

In the Gaza Strip, export and import has been made impossible through the hermetic **sealing off of the Strip from the rest of the world**. To date in 2006, the Karni crossing between Gaza and the rest of Palestine (one of the main passages for goods) has been closed 60% of the time. These extensive closures result in Palestinian produce rotting and being unviable in the marketplace. Crucial imports of raw materials and equipments for the production are unavailable and thus the entire economic infrastructure of the Gaza Strip is at a stand still.

### Forcing Palestinian farmers into Israeli industry as cheap labourers

With agricultural production having historically underwritten the economic self-sufficiency of Palestinian villages, the annexation by Israel into even more Palestinian agricultural lands forces Palestinians to become cheap labour for Israeli industries and settlements or otherwise be completely unable to survive and are forced into exile. This is the last step of a policy that has tried for 40 years to destroy the ties between people and their land.

## The myth of Israel “making the desert bloom”

Slogans of "worldwide agricultural development" and "cost-saving production" are heard at worldwide Israeli-sponsored trainings and conferences. But under the occupation, Palestinian agricultural lands are being razed to the ground for Israeli annexation and the construction of the Apartheid wall. Wall-encircled Palestinian ghettos are being finalised, Jerusalem is sealed off from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, and confiscated Palestinian lands are being used as platforms for racist and murderous Israeli measures. Just a few miles away from the Israeli hotels, conference rooms and tour buses are occupation bulldozers, military jeeps, missiles and Apache helicopters constantly pushing forward the Israeli aim of eliminating the Palestinian struggle.

As Israelis express publicly their so-called commitment to livestock and land, they simultaneously inflict their racism and dehumanisation on the Palestinian people who are caged in their own homes and built-up residential areas due to the Wall and its gates, unable to move, work or feed their children.

### *“Burned Land” policy*

In order to drive Palestinians off their land and to take over their fields for Israeli agribusiness and settlement, the Occupation has wrecked havoc to Palestinian agriculture:

- Within the West Bank, there is a network of roads 1270 kilometers long which will be reserved for Jews only.
- Between 2000 and 2004 according to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, **Israeli troops uprooted 1,145,154 trees and levelled 6,185 hectares of land.**
- Every summer Palestinian farmers are barred from extinguishing the fires destroying their crops
- Several places are used by the Occupation to dump (sometimes toxic) waste without any restrictions and controls.
- Israeli settlements, which are almost always located on top of a hill or at a high geographic location, allow their sewage water and waste to seep down or be dumped into Palestinian villages. This not only causes pollution of the underground water, but also leads to crop extinction.

### *“Unsustainable agricultural development”*

On top of these stolen lands, Israeli agribusiness is flourishing. Hi-tech capitalist profiteering mixed with colonial conquest uses the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources and the destruction of its nature in order to grow its genetically modified crops. Israel is ranked sixth in the world in terms of the amount of genetically modified crops it cultivates.

Instead of local and traditional agriculture, export mass plantations destroy the ecosystem in the West Bank. In the hot and semi-arid climate of the Valley the intensive agricultural development that the Occupation works to implement is made possible only via hi-tech and genetically modified agro-industry. The Jordan River’s water resources have been

drained by two enormous reservoirs. Natural springs have dried out as a result of the deep wells the Occupation uses to feed its agribusiness and settlements. The Dead Sea – a unique geological and natural oasis – risks drying out because of the lack of water flowing in from the Jordan River. Along with this Palestinians are denied the right to bore wells.

The Occupation has taken the entire Palestinian share of the water resources of the Jordan River and has transferred the water from major West Bank water aquifers to meet demands in Israel and in the settlements. Of the 600 million cubic meters of water produced annually in the West Bank, Israel, the occupying Power, draws 490 million cubic meters while the Palestinians receive only 110 million cubic meters. More than 40 deep-bore wells were also drilled in the West Bank for consumption by Israel. Towards the end of the 1970s, the occupying Power transferred responsibility over water resources from the military government to the Israeli national water company -Mekkorot. The result has been a severe water shortage for the Palestinian population and a drop or complete loss in agricultural output because Palestinian farmers have been forced to abandon their farmlands in order to find alternative means of livelihood. **Palestinians are today one of the societies with least water access in the world.** This lack of water and the rising prices for it are further rising prices for agricultural produce above the possibilities of Palestinian expenditure.

The mostly state-owned Carmel-Agrexco packing houses prepare fruit, herbs, flowers, palm oil and wine for export, much bound for Europe, where it will be displayed on supermarket shelves as 'Made in Israel', despite the fact that it is produced in militarily occupied Palestine. In fact business is booming for **Agrexco, which handles 60-70% of all goods produced in the illegal Settlements**, and who have increased their exports by 72% in the last three years.

The food which can't find international markets or whose quality isn't suitable for export is dumped on Palestinian markets, forcing local producers out of business since they are unable to compete with subsidised goods being produced at their expense.

### How Israeli agricultural practices affect farmers all over the world

Israeli agribusiness is a world leader in the capitalist hi-tech profiteering of our nature and the destruction of traditional farming communities. Their economy is based on the mistaken principles of trade as the solution to all problems, and on the development of expensive and dangerous technology like GMO's as the way to supposedly boost production. This promotes the privatization of all sectors and services, including land, water, credit, marketing, extension, and really agriculture as a whole. But privatization cannot help the people, when privatization means that resources and services are only available to those who can pay for them let alone those who are excluded by a racist state. Israeli genetically modified organisms are exported all over the world destroying biodiversity and livelihoods. Its fertilizers and pesticides fuel mass plantations globally. It has been documented that extensive use of chemical fertilizers can render soils infertile.

Multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements are seen by the agricultural biotechnology industry to spread these technologies.

This kind of “development” that serves to tie communities around the world into globalization and dependency is promoted globally via MASHAV, the Occupation’s center for international cooperation.

The agricultural research and development programs and activities of the center have been a core part of Israeli propaganda to the rest of the world. Established in 1958, MASHAV is part of the wider Israeli diplomatic mission to strengthen its grip over the developing world and it currently has projects in more than 140 countries. Through classes held in various countries as well as distance learning and seminars in Apartheid Israel’s universities, much of its projects focus on training for professionals from all over the world in ‘agriculture, dairy farming, desert ecology, early childhood education, emergency and disaster medicine, refugee absorption and water management,’ with over 200,000 participants in MASHAV sponsored courses to date.



Israeli “development” in the West Bank village of Bil’in. The Occupation is isolating village land behind the Wall, cutting off a main source of income

It is of the utmost irony that Israel speaks with authority to the developing world on ‘refugee absorption’ while it is the perpetrator of the largest and longest standing refugee tragedy in the world today.

Zionist ideology, dressed up as ‘aid’ and ‘humanitarianism’, belies the slogans of sustainable development; capacity building and supporting ‘emerging nations’, an attempt by Israel to distance itself from the destruction and havoc it reaps upon Palestinians on a daily basis.

MASHAV also state their agricultural programme ‘is based on our belief that Israel’s agricultural miracle can be replicated in other countries facing severe food security challenges today.’ This includes ‘Israel’s own tested solutions for problems such as water, capital and land shortages’ that ‘can help the

countries of the developing world transform their agriculture from traditional subsistence to sophisticated market-oriented production.’ Whether strategies such as robbing water supplies from a captive people, forcing them into structures of cheap labour to fund Israeli growth (akin to apartheid South Africa’s system of racial capital), and stealing land for new settlements to deal with land shortages are featured in MASHAV programmes is unlikely. Its role as an **institution disseminating myths regarding Israeli growth and development is extremely important as a propaganda exercise**

**for Israeli agricultural production**, hinged upon the expulsion of Palestinian people from their lands.

## What can be done - Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions

Doing business with Israel is invariably doing business with the occupation

*'Don't doubt the damage of the sanctions fight, devastating, them boycotts bite  
The more we know the more we can do, so get on down, it's up to you  
Don't mess, don't wait, don't hesitate, do your thing  
Hit the Apartheid State, cos' the little bit more  
That we take away, the little bit closer  
To the VICTORY day - AMANDLA!'*

From London Anti-Apartheid News, Summer (1989)

Within Palestine, renewed efforts around an effective boycott of agricultural produce are paving the way for a people-driven defense of Palestinian farming communities and a strengthened self-consciousness and pride.

Already under the most adverse conditions Palestinian-only markets are being set up. Israeli goods have been burned in popular demonstrations, a symbolic refusal to allow the occupation to continue its stranglehold upon Palestinian life and economy. Boycott trade fairs are held and recently the trade unions are starting to join efforts.

These operate under the knowledge that **Israel will lose up to four billion dollars annually** if a boycott can be fully applied by the Palestinian side.

For Palestinians living under Israeli Occupation, each day is an act of resistance and the often used phrase is 'to exist is to resist'. Each day that Palestinian men, women and children stand in line at any of the Checkpoints waiting for Israeli permission to pass, each day that Wafa has to remind her daughter to conserve water because there might not be enough to last the week, each day that Ya'cub passes buildings in Jerusalem that before 1948 used to belong to his family, each day that Khaled works with farmers in Hebron to build cisterns to collect precious rainwater, each day that Jamal meets with families struggling to stay on their land in Salfit as the Apartheid Wall casts shadows on their homes, each day that Hasan helps organize Palestinian laborers working in the informal sector of the economy, each day that Samia walks to the fields just outsider her village to harvest zataar and lettuce from her garden. Each of these small acts is one of quiet resistance.

The Palestinian appeal to world has been stated clearly by a **unified call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** issued on July 9, 2005.

It has become a core strategy to support the Palestinian liberation struggle and to force Israel to respect international law. It serves people of the world to exercise their power and exert pressure on their governments, institutions and companies. It reveals the true nature of Israel's occupation and policies, gives human rights real value by holding Israel

accountable, highlights the responsibility of the international community in supporting Israel and, above all, ends international support for Israel, since its policies would be unsustainable without external assistance.

Farmers and their organizations all over the world are called to do their part:

- **SAY NO TO MASHAV AND ITS "DEVELOPMENT"**
- **SAY NO TO ISRAELI FERTILIZERS AND ISRAELI CHEMICAL COMPANIES SUCH AS HAIFA CHEMICALS, AGROGREEN, DESHEN GAT, MAKTESHIM-AGAN, LUXEMBOURG CHEMICALS**
- **SAY NO TO ISRAELI AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE THAT IS KILLING THE LIVELIHOOD AND OFTEN LIVES OF PALESTINIAN FARMERS.**
- **SAY NO TO "MADE IN ISRAEL"**
- **SAY NO TO ISRAELI GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS AND SEEDS**