

# Defending Palestinian Food Sovereignty Against Occupation and Expulsion

Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign - [www.stopthewall.org](http://www.stopthewall.org)  
Arab Group for the Protection of Nature - [www.apnature.org](http://www.apnature.org)

## Destruction of Palestinian 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.

Before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, members of the Palestinian Arab community owned and/or cultivated some 93-94% of the land in mandate Palestine. In 1948, over 750 000 Palestinians been expelled, some 530 Palestinian villages have been completely destroyed. Today, 93% of the territory of the State of Israel is under direct control of the State and administered under a land tenure system aiming to limit leasehold and cultivation to Jews only.

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.

**N**early 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 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

For centuries, Jerusalem has been the hub for cultural, political and commercial activity in Palestine. A large regional market of Palestinian agricultural goods depended on the city. Today, Palestinian greengrocers and markets in Jerusalem are almost completely prevented from trading any Palestinian produce, including both plant and animal agricultural products. Palestinian produce is locked out by the Wall and Occupation forces give high fines and destroy the goods of Palestinian farmers trying to bring them into the city. The destruction of this core market is part of the wider Zionist policies of ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem and all of Palestine.



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 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.

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.

## The myth of Apartheid 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.

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:

- Between 2000 and 2004 according to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, Israeli troops uprooted 1,145,154 trees and leveled 6,185 hectares of land
- Every summer Palestinian farmers are barred from extinguishing the fires destroying their crops
- Within the West Bank, there is a network of roads 1270 kilometers long which will be reserved for Jews only.
- 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.

Israeli produce 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.

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.

### **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.

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.

For Palestinians living under Israeli Occupation, each day is an act of resistance and the often used phrase is

**'To Exist is to Resist'.**

**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"

