



SPECIAL FOCUS

KILLINGS BEATING AND PROHIBITED ACCESS:

**Israeli Systematic Denial
of Palestinian Farmers from
their Land During the 2024
Olive Harvest Season**

**Reporting period:
October-November 2024**



AL-HAQ

Introduction

Each year in October and November, Palestinians take to their lands for the annual olive harvest season. The olive harvest season constitutes an important part of the economic, cultural and agricultural life of the Palestinian people, and a primary source of income for many Palestinian families.¹ Indeed, the olive sector, a cornerstone of the Palestinian economy, encompasses olive oil, table olives, pickles, and soap production, generating between 160 and 191 million USD during productive years.² However, with each year passing, Israeli violence against olive harvesters continues, denying many farmers and their families from accessing their lands and harvesting their olive trees.

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupying forces (IOF) have destroyed over 75 percent of all olive trees since October 2023, according to the National Bureau for Defending Land of the Palestine Liberation Organization.³ Whereas in the West Bank – which is home to over 10 million olive trees that sustain the livelihoods of 80,000 to 100,000 Palestinian families⁴ – many are anticipating having to buy olive oil from other Palestinian farmers this year for the first time in their life, due to Israeli colonial violence.

Israeli measures to disrupt the olive harvest season in the West Bank encompass a range of tactics, from restricting Palestinian access to their lands to direct attacks by both the IOF and Israeli settlers. Between 1 October and 21 November 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) documented 225 settler-related incidents targeting the olive harvest in 82 areas in the West Bank.⁵ Of these, 171 attacks resulted in killings and physical injuries or property damage. Moreover, OCHA reported that, during the same period, over 2,500 olive trees and saplings were burned, sawed down, or otherwise destroyed, alongside widespread theft of crops and harvesting tools.

¹ See Al-Haq, “The Olive Harvest Season Disrupted by Settler Violence and Israeli Restrictions Imposed on Palestinian Farmers”, 7 November 2014, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6589.html>.

² Paltrade, “Olive Oil Sector Export Strategy 2014-2018”, at: <https://paltrade.org/uploads/1608048895726398816.pdf>.

³ PLO, “Farmers’ suffering During Olive Season This Year, Much More Than Last Year”, 20 October 2024, at: <https://nbprs.ps/2024/10/20/farmers-suffering-during-olive-season-this-year-much-more-than-last-year/>.

⁴ OCHA, “Record yield reported from 2019 olive harvest”, 28 February 2020, at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/record-yield-reported-2019-olive-harvest#ftn2>.

⁵ OCHA, “Humanitarian Situation Update #240 | West Bank” 21 November 2024, at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-240-west-bank-enar#:~:text=Since%201%20October%202024%2C%20OCHA,in%20casualties%20or%20property%20damage.>

Repeated Attacks by the IOF and Israeli Settlers During the 2024 Olive Harvest Season

During the 2024 olive harvest season, Al-Haq documented several incidents of attacks by the IOF and Israeli settlers against Palestinian residents of the West Bank while harvesting their olives, particularly in the villages of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi, Burin, Burqa, Faqqua, Jamma'in, Khallet Al-Nahleh, Silwan, Sinjil, and Susiya. This special focus provides a brief account of selected documented cases, indicating the severity of violent attacks by the IOF and Israeli settlers and the gravity of the damage inflicted on Palestinian rights.

1. The Killing of Hanan Abu Salameh, 59, by the IOF while Harvesting Olives

On 17 October 2024, at 7:30 am, **Hanan Abdulrahman Kayed Abu Salameh**, 59, along with her husband Hussam Rida Khalil Abu Salameh, 66, their son, Fares, 38, and another Palestinian farmer arrived at their land for olive harvesting in Faqqua village, located on the eastern side of Jenin city, in the occupied West Bank. Their land is located directly adjacent to the Annexation Wall, which was built on parts of Faqqua's lands beginning in 2003, hence trapping some land behind the Wall, making access extremely dangerous and contingent on requiring prior coordination with the Israeli authorities.

As of 16 October 2024, coordination was granted only to the owners of lands located adjacent to the Wall, provided that they stay at least 100 meters away.⁶ The Abu Salameh family arrived at their land in Um Kardoush area in Faqqua on 17 October 2024. Within five to ten minutes of their arrival, two Israeli occupying soldiers arrived in a military vehicle, fired bullets in the air and shouted at them, asking them to move further away from the Wall. Subsequently, the Abu Salameh family moved around 130-150 meters further away from the Wall, while an Israeli military vehicle occasionally drove by the area, until around 10:30 am — acts which prevented the Salameh family from harvesting their olive trees located directly adjacent to the Wall.

Then, two to four Israeli soldiers disembarked from the same vehicle, approximately 150 meters away from the Abu Salameh family, and began firing directly and repeatedly at them without prior warning. Feeling the bullets whizzing past their heads, Hussam and Fares, laid on the ground to protect themselves. *“My son Fares was shouting ‘lie down on the ground’, repeating it several times because the soldiers kept shooting directly at us. Everything happened in just a matter of seconds”*, Hussam told Al-Haq.⁷ In those brief seconds, however, the IOF bullets hit Hanan in the chest, causing her to fall on her back, and cry out for help: *“Hussam, I’ve been shot”*. Hanan was bleeding heavily from her back as her family rushed her to Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin city, first in their private vehicle and then in an ambulance. At 11:30 am, doctors at Ibn Sina Hospital pronounced Hanan dead due to a bullet wound that entered the chest area and exited through her back.⁸ Al-Haq's documentation confirmed that Hanan was positioned at a distance of more than 100 metres away from the location of the Annexation Wall, following the directives of the Israeli authorities.⁹

⁶ See Facebook page of Faqqua Village Council, 15 October 2024, at: <https://shorturl.at/5mZ17>.

⁷ Interview with Hussam Rida Khalil Abu Salameh, 66, resident of Faqqua village, on 19 October 2024, 2024-10-450-JN-K-T1-IL-WMN on file with Al-Haq.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Al-Haq field report on the killing of Hanan Abu Salameh, 20 October 2024, on file with Al-Haq.



*Picture of the location of the crime scene, Faqqua, Um Kardoush area. Bottom arrow marks Hanan Abu Salameh's position, and top arrow marks the IOF's position during the attack.
- Al-Haq's field researcher, 19 October 2024 (c) Al-Haq*

2. Settler Attacks Against Palestinian Harvesters

Over the years, the IOF and Israeli settlers have attacked and killed Palestinian farmers while harvesting their olives. During the 2023 olive harvest season, for example, an Israeli settler killed **Bilal Mohammad Shaheen Saleh**, 39, a father of four, while harvesting olive trees with his family in al-Sawiya village, south of Nablus.¹⁰

On 5 October 2024, **Abdul Manan Abdullah Abu Shamma**, 59, along with his wife, Muntaha Ahmad Zaitun (Abu Shamma), 53, his son Ahmad, 20, later joined by his other son Abdullah, 34, went to their land to harvest their olive trees in the Jbeil area, which is in the Khirbeh area in the north-west side of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village. Around half a kilometre away from their land lies an outpost called Havat Avichai¹¹ (Avichai Farm)¹² built by an Israeli settler, Eitan

¹⁰ Field report 2023-10-1423-NA-K-R-IL-SET, dated 28 October 2023, on file with Al-Haq; Urgent Letter from Palestinian Human Rights Organisations, 7 November 2023, at: https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2023/11/08/urgent-letter-immediate-intervention-needed-in-response-to-dangerous-escalation-of-settler-violence-1699435015.pdf.

¹¹ In their own words: "The farm was established in order to protect the state's lands in Nahal Shilo in western Samaria [...] We decided to take on our shoulders a national mission and leave home and a normal life in order to protect the Land of Israel for the Jewish people. This is not an easy task and it is very challenging 24/7, during the day we go out to pasture with the cows and at night we guard. There are over 10,000 dunams of state land in the area. The pastures are between the Samaria and Rosh Ha'Ein and are bordered by Nahal Shilo West." at: <https://www.tourshomron.org.il/business/%D7%97%D7%95%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%90%D7%91%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99-%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%A7-%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%98/>.

¹² See Facebook page of the outpost at:

https://www.facebook.com/people/%D7%97%D7%95%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%90%D7%91%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99/100092415476749/?name=xhp_nt_fb_action_open_user.

Melet¹³ and his wife Adi Rontsky,¹⁴ which has effectively appropriated 100 dunams of land from Palestinian owners in the Khirbeh area.¹⁵



The red pin indicates the location of Havat Avichai outpost, established on the lands in the north-west of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village (source: [google maps](#))

After few hours of work, at around 12:30 pm, the Abu Shamma family started hearing sounds of shouting and fighting coming from the direction of the outpost, soon realising that Israeli settlers were attacking other Palestinian farmers who were picking their olives. Fearing for their own lives and safety, the family decided to leave the area and called a driver to arrange their pick-up. At around 1:00 pm, while the family got into the car on the dirt road and were ready to leave, they were surprised by a car approaching from behind. The car carried three settlers who had come from the settlement of Ofarim from the southern side. One settler was holding a rifle and another a crowbar. The settlers attacked the family and the 60-year-old driver, who was also accompanied by his seven-year-old grandchild. Recalling the attack, Abdul Manan told Al-Haq:

The settler with the rifle approached to the driver's window, smashed the glass and started hitting his body with the barrel of the rifle. Meanwhile, the settler with the crowbar opened the door of the front-seat passenger and started hitting my son Abdullah with the crowbar. My wife and I were in the back seat of the car, receiving blows on our hands and arms as we tried to fend off the settlers' attack with our hands.

¹³ See Eitan Melet's account on X at: <https://x.com/EitanMelet>.

¹⁴ See Eitan Melet's post on Facebook with his wife Adi Rontsky, Facebook, 9 August 2024, at: <https://www.facebook.com/100004340919272/posts/pfbid0oHBezJYhi78MzKRpAZ9zjpGoH5bxvFoC44QLZwxe9nYVUoxgHvJaAZdDrnCCBMaLI/?app=fbl>.

¹⁵ According to Al-Haq's field documentation, the outpost was first established in 2023, to the south-eastern side of the Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village, then in 2024, the outpost was moved to the north-western side of the village, in the Khirbeh area, effectively appropriating 100 Dunams of land from Palestinian owners, and denying others from accessing their lands entrapped by this outpost. Interview with Ahmad Eid Mousa Samhan, 33, Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T1-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

A seven-year-old boy, the grandson of the driver, was also sitting in the back seat. He started crying and screaming, terrified by the settlers' attack. Thank God, he was not physically injured, as we placed him behind us and protected him with our bodies. Those few minutes felt like an eternity. I feared that the armed settler would shoot and kill us or that we might be killed by a blow from the crowbar the other settler was using to beat us...

We had nothing but our screams and hands to defend ourselves. Hearing our screams, a number of the village's residents who were picking olives nearby rushed to our rescue. At that point, the settlers got off us and returned to their car. Then, our driver turned on the car and drove away quickly. The settlers followed and chased us for about 100 meters until we reached a junction leading to the main paved road. At that point, they went another way, seemingly to join other settlers who were attacking other Palestinian farmers.¹⁶

As a result of this attack, Abdul Manan and his wife each sustained a fractured finger, whereas their son Abdullah suffered a broken right leg and bruising on his right shoulder, requiring a one-month recovery period. Their driver was transferred to the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah city, where he underwent internal fixation surgery for a fracture in his left hand.

Reflecting on the impact of the attack, Abdul Manan told Al-Haq,

Now, I don't know how I will return to my land in light of the presence of settlers and their attacks, especially given my son Abdullah's poor health condition. He is a father of three children and has been unemployed since the Israeli occupying authorities banned Palestinians from working inside the Green Line about a year ago, [since the start of the ongoing genocide in Gaza], as he used to work as an electrician at Israeli workshops. Now, due to his injury, he won't even be able to do simple tasks that previously provided his family with a modest income.¹⁷

The attack on the Abu Shamma family was not an isolated incident — Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village witnessed a similar sustained settler violence with brazen IOF support. On 5 October 2024, Israeli settlers launched a wave of attacks on around a hundred olive harvesters in the Khirbeh area, comprising men, women and children, beating them with iron rods and crowbars. Having received calls from the harvesters asking for help from the settlers' attack, the Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council and a group of residents of the village went to their aid. They were only a kilometre away, but could not reach the harvesters as the IOF were blocking the road that leads to the Khirbeh area. In his testimony to Al-Haq, the Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, recounted:

For almost an hour, we asked the Israeli occupying soldiers to let us pass telling them that people are being assaulted and might be killed. The soldiers kept responding that "there is nothing happening" and that "all is calm". At that time, we were about 30 people from the village, when the Israeli border police arrived in their jeeps. They got out of their vehicles, encircled us, forming what resembled a human barrier, and advanced towards us, before

¹⁶ Interview with Abdul Manan Abdullah Abu Shamma, 59, resident of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T2-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

throwing stun grenades at us and firing shots in the air. They then started to brutally push us with their hands, until they forced us back inside the village. We were unable to reach and help the farmers.

During that time, the farmers and their families, who had been in the Khirbeh area, began arriving to the village, with clearly visible beating marks [and injuries] on their bodies. We rushed them in our private vehicles to the nearest medical centres, as well as to the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah. The settlers remained in the Khirbeh area, while the IOF forced shop owners on the main street to close their shops within 90 seconds.¹⁸

One of the Palestinians attacked and beaten by settlers that day told Al-Haq:

I feel afraid to go back to my land to harvest the olive trees, fearing another settler attack on my family. My brothers share the same fear and do not want to go to the Khirbeh area, even though most of the village's olive trees are located there... I personally have many olive trees in the Khirbeh area that produce about 30 tins of oil. Some of this oil is for personal use, while I sell the rest as a source of income, especially since I have been unemployed for about a year after Israel prevented Palestinian workers from working inside the Green Line, where I used to work.¹⁹

That day, around 20 Palestinians were injured by settlers in Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village, with three requiring stitches and six sustaining fractures in different body parts, the youngest of which was a ten-year-old boy.²⁰ Some had their properties, including phones and vehicles stolen or damaged during the attack.²¹

¹⁸ Interview with Ahmad Eid Mousa Samhan, 33, Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T1-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

¹⁹ Interview with Hani Lutfi Muhammad Abu Salem, 60, resident of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T3-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

²⁰ Interview with Ahmad Eid Mousa Samhan, 33, Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T1-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

²¹ *Ibid.*



Picture of Nu'man Omar Radwan, 54, heavily beaten by settlers with injuries to the head on 5 October 2024, in the Khirbeh area in Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village (authorised for use by Al-Haq)

Notably, in Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi village, as in other areas, olive harvesting has become a primary source of income, particularly after Israel revoked permits and barred Palestinians from working inside the Green Line.²² According to the Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, less than 20 percent of village's residents are employed with the Palestinian Authority or in the local labour market.²³

Similarly, Al-Haq documented settler attacks and beatings with sticks and stones mostly to the head and upper body parts in Jamma'in village, southern Nablus city, on 7 October 2024 against 65-year-old **Ma'en Hamed Abdulrahman Awad** and his family, which led to his hospitalisation. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Ma'en recalled:

At around 3:30 pm, while we were harvesting olives from our trees, I suddenly heard my [55-year-old] wife Khawla screaming. She was about 15 to 20 meters away from me, also picking olives. My sons, Mohammad and Mahmoud, [36 and 20 years old, respectively] and I rushed toward her. To my shock, I saw about 15 Israeli settlers, dressed in black with their faces covered, carrying wooden sticks, and attacking my wife.

As soon we reached her, we tried to protect her, but the settlers attacked us with stones and wooden sticks. They also sprayed pepper spray from canisters they had brought with them. Both of my sons were hit on their heads with the sticks, while the settlers continued to beat my wife. As for me, they struck me on my head, back, and shoulders. Blood poured from a wound on my head, and I suffered a blow above my right eye...

²² Al-Haq, "Joint Urgent Appeal Parallel to its Aggression on Gaza, Israel Escalates its Oppression of Palestinians in Every Part of Historic Palestine", 2 November 2023, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22076.html>.

²³ Interview with Ahmad Eid Mousa Samhan, 33, Head of Al-Lubban Al-Gharbi Village Council, on 6 October 2024, 2024-10-031-RB-F-T1-IL-SET on file with Al-Haq.

*This is the first time that Israeli settlers have attacked my family and I during the olive harvest season, as my land is far from Israeli settlements. The nearest settlement, Tapuach, lies about five kilometres to the east.*²⁴

The attack lasted about ten minutes before the settlers withdrew north toward the main road linking Ariel and Kfar Tapuah settlements. The family alerted relatives, who rushed them to Karama Medical Center in Jamma'in. From there, an ambulance transferred them to Yasser Arafat Hospital in Salfit. After treatment therein, Ma'en's wife, Khawla, and her two sons were discharged, but Ma'en was transferred to Rafidia Hospital in Nablus and admitted to intensive care for eighteen hours, before being moved to the ward for further treatment and recovery. Khawla suffered body bruises, while Mohammad sustained a skull fracture and multiple wounds. Mahmoud had head injuries and bruises. Ma'en suffered a skull fracture, internal bleeding, swelling, and deep wounds on his head, requiring stitches.



A picture of Ma'en Awad, 65, recovering in the hospital from injuries sustained by the settlers' attack - Al-Haq's field researcher, 8 October 2024 (c)

After being moved to the Hospital's ward, Ma'en was informed by his family that the same settlers had also attacked another family of four from Jamma'in, including a woman and a child, and that they were subsequently taken to a hospital for treatment.²⁵

3. Blocking Palestinian Farmers' Access to Their Land

Al-Haq also documented incidents where Palestinian farmers were blocked from accessing their lands, under different pretexts, and prevented from harvesting their olive trees. For example, **Shadi Mohammad Ibrahim Samarin**, 47, and his family were unable to harvest their olives in Wadi Al-Rababa area, south of Silwan in eastern Jerusalem, as a group of settlers, accompanied by the Israeli Nature Authority and Israeli police, harvested the olives from their land on 31 September 2024. Shadi's battle for his land with the Israeli authorities and settlers dates years back.

²⁴ Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-10-077-NA-F-A1-IL-SET, taken from Ma'en Hamed Abdulrahman Awad, 65, resident of Jamma'in village, on 8 October 2024.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Shadi owns agricultural land inherited from his grandfather, with official documents, including an Ottoman title deed, proving his ownership. This 21-dunam plot (21,000 square meters), located in Wadi Al-Rababa area south of Silwan, lies approximately 200 meters from where the so-called ‘City of David’ settlement was established.²⁶ The land is planted with olive trees and cultivated with seasonal vegetables.

Since 2000, Shadi and his family have been facing harassment from the Israeli Nature Authority, claiming the land contains archaeological remains. In 2004, the family successfully prevented the Authority’s attempt to excavate, providing proof of ownership of the land. In 2018, the Nature Authority, with Israeli police, invaded Shadi’s land under the pretext of clearing wild herbs, despite claiming they were protected plants. Shadi sought legal intervention by appealing to the Israeli Magistrate’s Court, aiming to secure an injunction that would prevent further encroachment. However, his efforts were unsuccessful, and the Nature Authority continued its intrusive actions on the land.

Determined to protect his property, Shadi took the matter to the District Court. For over a year, the family endured a protracted legal battle as the Nature Authority, under the watchful eye of the Israeli police, uprooted Shadi’s seasonal crops, replaced them with their own, and installed surveillance cameras on the property, accusing the family of removing their plants. In 2022, Israeli police raided Shadi’s home, ransacked its contents, arrested his 16-year-old son, Mohammed, and interrogated him for four days on charges related to removing crops and the surveillance cameras.

The lengthy legal battle led to a 2022 court decision favouring the Nature Authority, granting them permission to undertake agricultural activities while allowing the family to harvest olives only with prior coordination. Moreover, Shadi was fined 40,000 NIS (around 11,150 USD) for allegedly obstructing the Nature Authority’s operations. Undeterred, Shadi and his legal team appealed the decision, leading to a reduced fine of 20,000 NIS for him and 20,000 NIS for the Abbasi family, co-defendants in the case who own an adjacent plot.

Despite the continued harassment and legal setbacks, Shadi and his family remained resilient. Every year, during the olive harvest season, they returned to their land, steadfast in their determination to preserve their heritage and rightful ownership. In 2022, Israeli police arrested and assaulted some family members while they were harvesting their olive trees. In 2023, the family came across announcements made by the Nature Authority calling on settlers to harvest olives in Wadi Al-Rabab area. Fearing theft, the family rushed to gather their crop before the settlers arrived. While succeeding that year, the settlers managed to steal their crop the following year, during the 2024 olive harvest season. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Shadi recalled the following:

On 31 September 2024, we were shocked to see a large number of settlers, accompanied by the Israeli police and the Israeli Nature Authority, present in our land and harvesting our olive trees. Two young men from the family tried to stop the settlers, but they were unable to do so because the settlers were backed by the Israeli police. We lost this year’s olive harvest, as the settlers stole it. We are still fearful that they might return to the land again.²⁷

²⁶ Al-Haq, “Finding David: Unlawful Settlement Tourism in Jerusalem’s so-called ‘City of David’”, 2022.

²⁷ Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-10-070-JE-F-A1-IL-NTG, taken from Shadi Mohammad Ibrahim Samarin, 47, resident of Silwan, on 11 October 2024.

Using another harassment tactic, Palestinian farmers in Burqa village, eastern Ramallah Governorate, were unable to access their lands under the pretext of the Israeli military commander declaring the area a closed military area. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, the Deputy Head of Burqa Village Council, **Zaki Nu'man Abdul Ra'uf Barakat**, 64, recalled that, on 20 October 2024, a group of around 250 people headed to the Al-Marj area, south-western Burqa – an area which did not require any prior coordination with the Israeli authorities to harvest the olive trees found therein. When they reached the area, around eight Israeli soldiers interrupted their way, denied them access, and attacked them with stun grenades and pushed them away. One Israeli soldier raised a piece of paper in the air and shouted that this is a closed military area that requires prior coordination to access. Consequently, the landowners of Burqa were denied from harvesting 80 percent of the villages' olive trees in 2024.²⁸

The brutality of the above practice has denied many Palestinians from accessing their lands and harvesting their crops. With the building and expansion of settlements and outposts and an increase in Israeli settler violence accompanied by the IOF, **Laith Barakat Youssef Said**, a 45-year-old Palestinian farmer, told Al-Haq that October 2023 was the last time he managed to access his lands in western and northern Burqa, which are planted with olives. The illegal Giv'at Assaf outpost has been established on his lands. Settlers accompanied by the IOF, have continuously carried out beatings with batons, smashed cars and sprayed pepper gas, resulting in severe body injuries.²⁹ Laith and his family also own lands located to the east of Burqa, which were planted with barley and wheat, and is used for grazing sheep. However, Israeli settlers established two colonial outposts in that area in 2023, and have since prevented Laith and other landowners from accessing their lands. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Laith recalled the following:

All these areas have become effectively “forbidden” to us, as we can no longer access them. In 2024, during the olive harvest season, we did not go to any of the lands mentioned earlier. Our olive harvesting was limited to trees near and between our homes. This year, settlers have repeatedly burned village lands, including olive trees and fields planted with wheat. Among the burned lands were two plots owned by my father, planted with wheat and olives, located right next to the village.

Before the settlers began preventing us from accessing our lands, my father, my five siblings, and I used to produce approximately 40 to 50 tins of olive oil from our olive trees. Part of this production was for our own consumption, and the rest was sold. However, this year, we do not expect to produce more than seven tins of olive oil. This amount will not be enough for our family, and for the first time in our lives, we will have to buy olive oil.³⁰

Even when coordination for specific days is arranged and established, Palestinians continue to face significant obstacles in accessing their lands and harvesting their olive trees. On 9 November 2024, following prior coordination between the Burin Village Council and the Palestinian civil liaison office, **Khitam Daoud Mohammad Najjar**, 63, and her son Mahran, 40, residents of Burin village south of Nablus, accessed their agricultural land in the Kafet Al-Za'tar area to harvest olives. Their land, comprising 70 olive trees, is located approximately

²⁸ Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-10-075-RB-F-A2-IL-NTG, taken from Zaki Nu'man Abdul Ra'uf Barakat, 64, resident of Burqa village, on 23 October 2024.

²⁹ Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-10-075-RB-F-A1-IL-NTG, taken from Laith Barakat Youssef Said, 45, resident of Burqa village, on 20 October 2024.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

one and half kilometres south of the village, and around three kilometres away from where the Yitzhar settlement was established.

Almost three hours into harvesting the olive trees, Khitam was attacked by Yitzhar's security guard, Isaac Levy known as 'Yaqoub', and other Israeli settlers, some of which were armed wearing military-style clothing, and supported by the IOF. In her affidavit to Al-Haq, Khitam recounted the following:

[When we arrived to the land,] we began inspecting the olive trees and found them heavily laden with fruit... I was filled with immense happiness and joy when we were able to access our land because we were prevented by the Israeli authorities from accessing our land during the 2023 olive harvest season....

At around 9:30 am, while we were still harvesting olives and dropping them onto the plastic sheets beneath the trees, my son and I were surprised to see a white four-wheel-drive [4X4] Toyota vehicle approaching, known to be belonging to Isaac Levy, also known as 'Yaqoub', the security guard of the Yitzhar settlement. He stopped his vehicle about 500 meters away on the western side, inside the agricultural lands surrounding our property. However, we did not pay much attention to the presence of the settlement guard in the area because there was coordination permitting our presence on the land.³¹

Around 30 minutes after, a group of Israeli settlers started attacking other nearby farmers, and soon attacked Khitam. In her affidavit to Al-Haq, Khitam recalled the following:

After about half an hour, at around 10:00 am, while I was harvesting the olive trees, my son told me that the settlement guard, accompanied by Israeli soldiers, was attacking farmers who were picking olives in their lands. Fearing for our safety and the risk of losing our harvesting tool, my son quickly took the battery-powered harvesting tool and left the area, urging me to follow him.

I stayed behind with the olives we had harvested. Suddenly, I was attacked by about 10 people dressed in military clothing similar to that of the Israeli occupying soldiers. They were armed with automatic rifles, and I watched as they cocked their weapons and pointed them at me.

They started shouting at me in Hebrew, and saying 'Zaytoon, Zaytoon' [olives, olives]. They then headed toward the plastic sheets we had laid out to collect the harvested olives and violently scattered the olives across the ground beneath the trees. They also prevented me from carrying the bags of olives and threw them to the ground, causing the olives to spill out. They were violent and aggressive, and they kept shouting at me. I had no choice but to flee and leave the land [and the harvested olives]. I felt immense pain and sadness.³²

³¹ Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-11-093-NA-F-A1-IL-WMN, taken from Khitam Daoud Mohammad Najjar, 63, resident of Burin village, on 11 November 2024.

³² *Ibid.*

Yitzhar settlers, including Isaac Levy, are infamous for frequently targeting Palestinians and their properties, while also being backed by the IOF.³³ Notably, Khitam’s land was previously set on fire by settlers two months prior to this incident, damaging olive trees and burning surrounding agricultural lands. Recognising Israeli efforts to colonise more Palestinian land, Khitam stated,

*Our agricultural land has been a primary source of livelihood, producing around 15 tins of olive oil each year. We used to access our land easily and without the need for prior coordination with the Israeli authorities. However, for the second consecutive year, the IOF and settlers have been harassing us by imposing specific days for harvesting olives in areas near the settlement... These measures are aimed at forcing us to abandon our land, making it easier for settlers to seize it and expand their settlements at the expense of our property and surrounding lands.*³⁴

Legal Analysis

Preventing olive harvesting must be contextualised and understood as part of Israel’s colonial and genocidal violence, as it is a way for Israel to continue denying the Palestinian people’s fundamental right to self-determination, including sovereignty over lands and natural resources.³⁵ Moreover, the IOF’s deliberate failure to protect Palestinians – and their active participation in violence against them during Israeli settlers attacks³⁶ – violates Israel’s obligation to “ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety” of the occupied Palestinian population as protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention.³⁷

The documented incidents above exemplify Israel’s blatant disregard for its legal obligations, including the right to life of Palestinians, which is enshrined as “the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted even in situations of armed conflict and other public emergencies”.³⁸ Further, Israel’s colonial settlement enterprise and its associated regime, including the Annexation Wall and the permit system amongst other measures and policies, severely restrict Palestinians’ right to movement which seriously impact their livelihoods. As such, Israel is in breach of its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which guarantees Palestinians’ rights to work and freedom of movement.

Notably, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has reaffirmed that Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is unlawful and must come to an end “as rapidly as possible”.³⁹ It further observed that Israel’s legislation and measures constitute a breach of Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibits racial segregation and apartheid.⁴⁰ The ICJ concluded that Israel is “under an

³³ Al-Haq, “Special Focus: Yitzhar Settler Violence is on the Rise Reporting Period: July – October 2020”, at: https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2021/01/05/special-focus-yetshar-1609831178.pdf.

³⁴ *Supra* note 25.

³⁵ See Al-Haq, “The Olive Harvest Season Disrupted by Settler Violence and Israeli Restrictions Imposed on Palestinian Farmers”, 7 November 2014, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6589.html>.

³⁶ See Al-Haq, “From the Field: Palestinians Held at Gunpoint in Israeli Settler Attack”, 1 October 2024, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/24731.html>.

³⁷ Article 43, The Hague Regulations.

³⁸ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36 (2018) on Article 6 of the ICCPR on the right to life (30 October 2018) UN Doc CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 2.

³⁹ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, 19 July 2024, para. 285.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, para. 229.

obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the [OPT]” and to “make reparation for the damage caused to all the natural or legal persons concerned in the [OPT]”.⁴¹ The harassment and violence inflicted on Palestinian farmers further constitutes inhuman acts that perpetuate the systematic oppression and domination of the Palestinian people, per the Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, and further amounts to the crime against humanity of apartheid under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

To this end, it is incumbent upon Third States to address attacks by the Israeli authorities, the IOF, and Israeli settlers on Palestinian farmers by addressing their root causes, namely Israel’s Zionist settler-colonial apartheid regime and illegal occupation. Third States must ensure that such root causes, characterised by increasing genocidal violence, dispossession, and oppression, be brought to an immediate, total and unconditional end. As such, Third States must impose sanctions⁴² and a two-way arms embargo against Israel,⁴³ including imposing targeted sanctions on complicit persons and institutions — Israeli and international — contributing to Israel’s international crimes against Palestinians. Third States must also hold dual-national Israeli perpetrators accountable under their national jurisdictions, exercise universal jurisdiction, and cooperate with investigative and/or prosecutorial bodies, including the ICC.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, para. 285.

⁴² Al-Haq, “Sanctions Now! Palestinian Civil Society Demands Immediate International Compliance with the ICJ Findings on Israel’s Unlawful Occupation”, 3 September 2024, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/23818.html>.

⁴³ Al-Haq, “Ending Complicity in International Crimes: A Two-Way Arms Embargo on Israel”, 8 November 2023, at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22123.html>.