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The Environmental status of Ni'lin Village

Location and Population

The village of Ni'lin is located some 18 kilometers to the west of Ramallah city; It is bordered by Deir Qiddis Village, the settlements of Nili and Na'aleh from the east, Al Midya Village and Modi'in Illit (Kiryat Sefer) settlement bloc from the south, Budrus and Qibya villages from the North, and the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line) from the west, about 3 kilometers away from it.

The urban area of the village stands on 660 dunums of land, about 4.5% of the village's total land area and is a home to 4,751 inhabitants (PCBS 2006), most of whom tended to work in Agriculture after loosing their jobs as constructional workers inside Israel following the eruption of the second Intifada in September 2000.

Before the 1948 war, Ni'lin village had an area of 15898 dunums; when the armistice agreement was signed between the Jordanian and Israeli sides, 1104 dunums were lost from the village's area. Today, the village stands on 14794 dunums of land.

The Oslo II Land Classification

In the Oslo II Interim Agreement that was signed in September 1995 between the Palestinians and Israelis, the Palestinian areas in the West Bank were classified into three areas A, B and C which aimed at a phased withdrawal of the Israeli military forces from these areas until the accomplishment of a final status agreement.

1Accordingly, the 14794 dunums of Ni'lin Village were classified to areas B and C; 988 Dunums of which were classified as Area B (6.7 % of the total village area)

1 Area A: constitutes the areas where the Israeli army has pulled out fully and Palestinians have complete autonomy over administrative and security issues. Area A, according to the Oslo II agreement, covered the main cities of the West Bank, except for Hebron.



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where most of the built up area is concentrated; while the remaining area of the village, a total of 13806 dunums of Ni'lin village lands were classified as Area C (93.3 % of the total village area) and contain all the agricultural lands and the open spaces in the village. See Table 1

Classification of Area	Area in dunums	% of the Village's total area
Area A	0	0
Area B	988	6.7
Area C	13806	93.3
Total Area	14794	100

ARIJ GIS Database - 2007

The Israeli Colonial Activities in Ni'lin Village following the 1967 War

Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the successive Israeli Governments adopted a policy of land confiscation for the various Israeli purposes which were mostly exemplified in the establishment of Settlements, bypass Roads and military bases.

Accordingly, The village of Ni'lin witnessed the confiscation of its lands for the establishment of five Israeli settlements which stand on 1963 dunums, 13.3% of

Area B: Palestinians have full control over the civil responsibilities and Israel continues to have overriding responsibility for security.

While Area (C): Palestinians have responsibility for civil life such as economics, health and education; however, Israel retains full control over security and administration related to territory.



the village's total land area. The settlements are a home to more than 36,000 Israeli settlers as illustrated in **Table 2** below

Settlement Name	Date of Establishment	Population (2005)	Settlement area Inside village Boundary (Dunum)	Total settlement Area (Dunum)
Hashmona'im	1985	2225	934	1050
Mattityahu	1980	1353	661	683
Menora	1998	1804	20	759
Shilat	1977	376	74	978
Mod'in Illit (Qiryat Sefer)	1991	30484	274	3973
Total Area		36242	1963	7443

Source: ARIJ GIS UNIT 2007

The Israeli Segregation Plan in Ni'lin Village

The construction of the Israeli Segregation wall had its devastating impact on Ni'lin village as it extends a length of 8.7 km on lands of the village and cuts its southeastern part from the remaining area of the village. See **Table 3 & Map 1**

Wall Status	Length (km)	Percent from Total Wall Length in Ni'lin Village
Existing Phase	2.7	31
Under Construction Phase	3.1	35.6
Planning Phase	2.9	33.3
Total	8.7	100

Source: ARIJ GIS Database 2007



Upon completion, the wall will cause the confiscation and isolation of 5883 dunums of Ni'lin's lands, 39.8% of the village's total land area, most of which are agricultural and open spaces. The wall will also annex the five Israeli settlements established on Ni'lin village's land to Israel's proper. **See Table 4 for more information**

Land use Land cover 2006 for Ni'lin Village Boundary	Total Area in Dunum	Isolated Lands from Ni'lin's Village lands (dunum)	% from Total Village Area
Agricultural Lands	5487	1059	7.2%
Forests and Open Spaces	6684	2847	19.2%
Palestinian Built-up Area	660	14	0.1%
Israeli Settlement	1963	1963	13.3%
Total Area	14794	5883	39.8%

Source: ARIJ GIS Database 2007

The impact of the Israeli Occupation practices on the Environmental status of Ni'lin village.

The Israeli activities in Ni'lin village not only target land but also contribute to the destruction and pollution of environment. The Israeli settlements established on lands of Ni'lin village play a major role in increasing the environmental problems in the village as Israeli settlers dispose their solid and wastewater generated from settlements to the neighboring Palestinian lands which are also inhabited by Palestinians from the village; Two sites were noticed growing due to the huge amounts of wastes being dumped into them. The first is located in Area "C", on a piece of land belonging to Mr. Hussein Khalil Mohammed Nafe' and is very close to the urban area of the village and stands on 20 dunums of land.

The second dumping site is located on a piece of land belonging to Mr. Abdul Hakeem Abdul Nabi Al-Absi and stands on an area of 30 dunums and is relatively far from the urban area of the village. Both sites are not licensed by the village council neither by any other official body and don't apply to health and environmental laws and legislations.



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Reports of illegal disposal of solid wastes date back to year 2005, when residents of Ni'lin village started to notice the Israeli trucks dumping solid waste into the aforementioned sites. After a thorough investigation made by village residents and the Municipality of Ni'lin, it turned out that the solid waste being dumped comes from Israeli settlements established on lands of Ni'lin village and others located inside the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line). It's worth mentioning that the dumping sites, although stand on Palestinian lands; they don't serve the Palestinian urban community of the village.

During a field visit to the site, it was noticed that the solid waste being dumped contains plastic wastes, rubber, remnants of building and constructions which include cement blocks, iron, aluminum, copper and wood. Villagers and land owners also assured that the sites contain remnants of hospitals (chemicals), restaurants and houses.

Palestinian villagers expressed their resentment from the smoke and the bad smells generated from burning of the wastes; in addition to the very serious effects such burnings caused to environment and natural resources. It is worth mentioning that some cables' remnants and plastic materials are being burnt to extract mineral materials to be later sold in the market. About 50 trucks unload wastes to the dumping sites daily, some of which, their height rise up to 10 meters.

Mr. Ayman Nafie, Mayor of Ni'lin village said that the village formed a committee to investigate the dangers resulting from the two dumping sites. The committee consists of the Palestinian Environment Authority and the Department of Environmental Health at the Palestinian Ministry of Health in addition to the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights. Based on what was stated in the report prepared by the Committee, It is recommended that the burning of solid wastes at the sites should be stopped immediately.

The Palestinian Environment Authority consider the disposal of wastes into the Palestinian lands among the violations committed by Israel against the Palestinian Environment where, in many cases, such wastes contain hazardous residues as evidenced in the many incidents of smuggling wastes into the Palestinian Territories that have been seized to avoid the high costs being paid



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for disposing wastes inside Israel. According to what have been stated in the **Palestinian Environment Law**, it is forbidden to import waste and bury it in the Palestinian lands as stated in **NO (7) of 1999**, Articles (10), (12) & (13).

Article (10)

All agencies and individuals, in conducting any digging, construction; demolition, mining or transportation of debris and sands generated by such activities, shall commit themselves to take all necessary precautions for safe storage and transportation of such materials to prevent any environmental pollution.

Article (12)

No person shall be authorized to manufacture, store, distribute, use; treat, or dispose any hazardous substance or waste whether it is solid, liquid, or gas, unless in accordance with the orders and directives specified by the Ministry in coordination with the competent agencies.

Article (13)

B. It is forbidden to pass hazardous waste through the Palestinian territories or through the territorial water or free economic zone of Palestine, unless a special permit is obtained from the Ministry.

It also is a violation liable to be punished by law, as stipulated in articles (61) and (62) and (63) of the Palestinian environment law.

Article (61)

Any person violates the provisions of Article (10) of this law shall be punished by paying a fine of twenty Jordanian Dinars or the equivalent thereof in the legally circulated currency, or imprisonment for a period of not less than three days.



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Article (62)

Any person violates the provisions of Article (12) of this law shall be punished by a fine of not less than 1,000 and not more than 3,000 Jordanian Dinars or the equivalent thereof in the legally circulated currency and not more than three years of imprisonment, or one of the two penalties.

Article (63)

A. Any person violates the provisions in section (A) of Article (13) of this law shall be sentenced to eternal imprisonment with hard work, in addition to confiscating or eliminating the wastes at the violator's expense.

In addition, it's a violation to International laws, treaties and conventions, since international law prohibits any State from throwing its waste into the territory it occupies. The indiscriminate burning of wastes in the open air is also banned in accordance to Article (23) of the Palestinian environment law; thus, people responsible for polluting the environment must be brought to trial.

The village also suffers from the flow of wastewater from Israeli settlements such as Hashmona'im and the settlements inside the Green Line into its land. The flood of wastewater intersects with Ad Doyeh water flow that separates the village of Ni'lin from the village of Al Midya (South of Ni'lin).

To Conclude

The indiscriminate and illegal dumping sites in the West Bank are the gathering of all kinds of insects, bad smells and diseases. They contribute much to the degradation of nature, biodiversity and the landscape of the village in addition to the health problems caused by them. Added to that, the smoke emitting from the incineration of solid wastes negatively affects environment and human health; in addition, the remnants of such wastes, which contain high quantity of organic materials and hazardous metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead finds its way into groundwater and contaminates it.



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The dumping sites are often the same places used for the disposal of wastewater which is collected from cesspits where vacuum trucks' drivers find such sites as the best places to get rid of wastewater which in turn causes them to mix and contribute much to the **formation** of pollutants.