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Unholy Communion between the Israeli Settlers and the Israeli Army to Wage War on Palestinian Olive Groves

October 2021



No tree in history has faced such a severe battle as the olive tree in the occupied State of Palestine. The Israeli settlers, and while the Israeli occupation army turning a blind eye to their violations, have begun their deliberate attacks on this valuable tree, uprooting and destroying it in the hope of erasing a key pillar of the Palestinian identity. The constant target of the olive trees, as well as burning and chopping them, are manifestations of settlers' hatred and disrespect for all that resembles peace and harmony.

During the period from January 2021 to October 2021, the Israeli settlers and under the security of the Israeli occupation Army (IOA) have violated and damaged around 20,000 trees in the occupied West Bank; by which approximately 8,000 are Olive trees. Tubas Governorate in the far north of the occupied West Bank was the most affected by these attacks with a record of more than 10,000 damaged trees, followed by Salfit and Nablus Governorates in the north of the West Bank (4,106 and 1,799 damaged trees respectively). (See Chart 1).

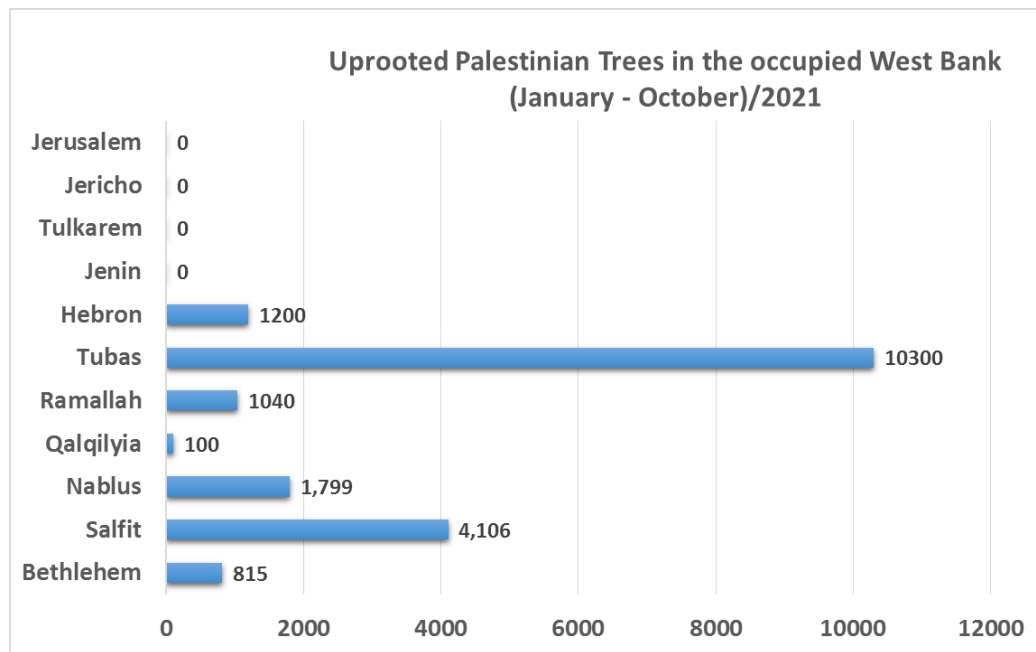


Chart (1): Number of damaged trees by governorate in occupied State of Palestine (as of October 2021).

Just in time of the Olive Harvest Season, the Israeli settlers have been doing everything possible to prevent Palestinian farmers from harvesting their olives. The month of October has been full of incidents from this kind. It started with a group of settlers entering the Palestinian owned lands in the southeast side of the village of Burin, near the settlement of Yitzhar, and cutting the branches of a number of olive trees owned by Palestinian families in the village. Settler attacks then quickly spread to other West Bank areas and caused more losses and damages.

Below is a breakdown of the attacks committed by settlers since the beginning of October 2021.

- On 3 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers closed the road leading to the Khamet Hassan area in Bidya town, and prevented hindered the farmers from reaching work and picking olives from their agricultural lands.
- On 5 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers entered the agricultural lands in the village of Burin, near the "Yitzhar" settlement, and set fire to a number of olive trees owned by the citizen: Imad Hamza Zabin and his brothers.
- On 5 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers entered the agricultural lands in Wadi Abd al-Rahman area, west of the separation wall, adjacent to the "Ariel" settlement, north of Salfit, and stole the product of 26 olive trees.
- On 5 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers stormed the agricultural lands in the village of Kafr Qalil in Qalqilyia Governorate, near the settlement of "Bracha", and stole the olive crop of citizen: Omar Youssef Al-Quni.
- On 6 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers stormed the agricultural lands of the village of Jurish near the settlement of "Migdalim ", and set fire to a number of olive trees.
- On 6 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers invaded the lands of As-Sawiya village, and stole the crop of a number of olive trees.
- On 8 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers raided the lands of Burin village in Nablus Governorate, and attacked a number of Palestinians while they were picking olives from their lands in the Rummana area, south of the village.
- On 8 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands of Al-Lubban Al-Sharqiya village in Nablus Governorate, and attacked citizen: Nael Kamal Awaisa.
- On 8 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands of Khirbet Yanoun in the town of Aqraba in Nablus Governorate north of the occupied Wst Bank, and attacked a number of Palestinians while they were picking olives, and expelled them from their lands.
- On 8 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers invaded the lands of Wadi Al Sharq area in Sa`ir town in Hebron Governorate, and attacked a number of Palestinians while they were working on their land.
- On 8 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers from the "Adora" settlement raided the agricultural lands of At Taybeh area in Tarqumiya town in Hebron Governorate, and cut down 100 olive trees planted on 20-dunums land.
- On 9 October 2021, a group of armed Israeli settlers raided the lands of Kafr al-Dik village in Salfit Governorate, and attacked a number of Palestinian farmers while they were picking olives, and expelled them from the place at gunpoint.
- On 9 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers from "El Matan" outposts in Wadi Qana area in Salfit Governorate and attacked a number of Palestinian farmers

from the town of Kafr Thulth while they were picking olives from their lands in the Khallet Hassan area. The settlers also prevented farmers from continuing their work.

- On 9 October 2021, a group of armed Israeli settlers invaded the lands of Khallet Hassan area in Bidya town, and attacked a number of Palestinian farmers while they were picking olives and expelled them from the place.
- On 9 October 2021, "Yitzhar" settlement Guards prevented Palestinian farmers in the village of Burin from continuing to harvest their olive trees in their lands in the southeastern area of Burin village, and forced them to leave the area.
- On 10 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers invaded the lands of Al Mazraa Al Gharbia, and set fire to a number of olive trees.
- On 10 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers stole the olive crop in Bab al-Diqeh area in Khirbet Yanoun, near the town of Aqraba in Nablus Governorate.
- On 11 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands of Deir al-Hatab village in Nablus Governorate, near "Elon Moreh" settlement, and attacked a number of Palestinians while they were picking olives.
- On 11 October 2021, the Israeli occupation Army (IOA) positioned in Al-Ras area, west of Salfit CITY, fired stun and tear gas canisters towards volunteer citizens while they were on their way to help the farmers in picking olives from their lands threatened with confiscation, and prevented them from reaching the farmers' assistance.
- On 12 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands in al-Karm area, west of Qaryut village, and attacked a number of Palestinians while they were picking olives.
- On 12 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands of Deir al-Hatab, and assaulted a number of citizens while they were picking olives, injuring 2
- On 12 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers from the "Ma'on" settlement, in Yatta town, cut down and uprooted 70 olive trees belonging to Hafez Issa Al-Harini.
- On 12 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers attacked the lands of Sebastia village, near the settlement of "Shavei Shomron", and uprooted about 700 apricot seedlings and 200 olive seedlings. Settlers also stole the olive crop planted on 18 dunums of land owned by Majd Talal Shehadeh
- On 13 October 2021, A group of Israeli settlers sneaked into the village of Awarta village in Nablus Governorate and chopped dozens of olive trees and spoiled others in Awarta town
- On 13 October 2021, Israeli settlers stole equipment used by Palestinians to harvest their olive crops in the village of Burin, south of Nablus, in the northern occupied West Bank. Settlers came from the settlement of Yitzhar and the equipments included wooden ladders, and flat sheets of plastic, among others.

- On 13 October 2021, Israeli settlers razed more than 60 dunums of Al Mughayyar village lands where they previously uprooted about 500 olive trees.
- On 14 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers uprooted more than 80 olive trees in the village of al-Mughayyer, north of the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, near the outpost of Adi Ad.
- On 16 October 2021, Israeli settlers from Rechalim settlement attacked Palestinian farmer Yousef Hammoudeh, his family (four members) and injured them in Yasouf village, northeast of Salfit in the northern occupied West Bank. Dozens of settlers hurled rocks at the Hammoudeh family while they were harvesting their olives, injuring three members, Hammoudeh in the head, his wife in the leg, and his son in the back. Settlers also smashed the windows of his car, stole the harvested olives and ladders and other tools, and pepper spraying another local farmer.
- On 17 October 2021, Israeli occupation army (IOA) injured many Palestinians after the army invaded their orchards while they were picking their olive trees, in Zabbouba village, west of Jenin, in northern West Bank. The IOA fired gas bombs at dozens of Palestinians, including volunteers from the Al-Quds Open University while picking the olive trees in Palestinian orchards in Zabbouba. Dozens of Palestinians suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation. The orchards are in close proximity of the Israeli separation wall.
- On 18 October 2021, Israeli settlers set fire to Palestinian agricultural land in the northern West Bank town of Burqa, north of Nablus city. Settlers set fire to Palestinian farms located near the former settlement of Homesh, which was evacuated in 2005.
- On 18 October 2021, Israeli settlers cut down tens of olive trees in Salem town, east of the northern West Bank city of Nablus. Palestinian farmers found out in the morning that dozens of their olive trees, east of the town, were chopped down by settlers from nearby settlements.
- On 18 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers sneaked their way into an olive orchard, south of the village of Yatma in Nablus Governorate, and stole harvesting equipment belonging to farmer Nasser Snubar.
- On 19 October 2021, Israeli settlers from the nearby Shavi Shomron settlement chopped dozens of Palestinian-owned olive trees in the northern occupied West Bank, northwest of Nablus. Palestinian farmers from the villages of Deir Sharaf, Sebastia and An-Naqura found that dozens of their olive trees had been destroyed.

- On 19 October 2021, a group of Israeli settlers from Neve Daniel settlement attacked many Palestinians while picking their olive trees in their orchards, west of Nahhalin town, west of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. Settlers assaulted Ayed Abdul-Aziz and his family while picking their trees in their olive orchards in the Banias area, in the western part of the village.

As in previous years, the Olive harvest season was also disrupted by Israeli settler attacks, who physically assaulted farmers, destroyed or set fire to their trees, stole their Olive produce or equipment used in place. However, this year has recorded the highest number of trees that were uprooted by Israeli settlers comparing to previous years, and we are still counting! Chart 2 below shows the number of uprooted/damaged trees that were documented by ARIJ during the past six years.

The number of uprooted/damaged trees recorded during the year 2021 (up until October) is more than double the number recorded in the last year, and was the highest it has been in the past five years, with losses estimated at more than 300,000 USD. Most of the increased number of uprooted/damaged trees is directly attributable to increased settler attacks which increased by 21% this year comparing to last year and we are still counting.

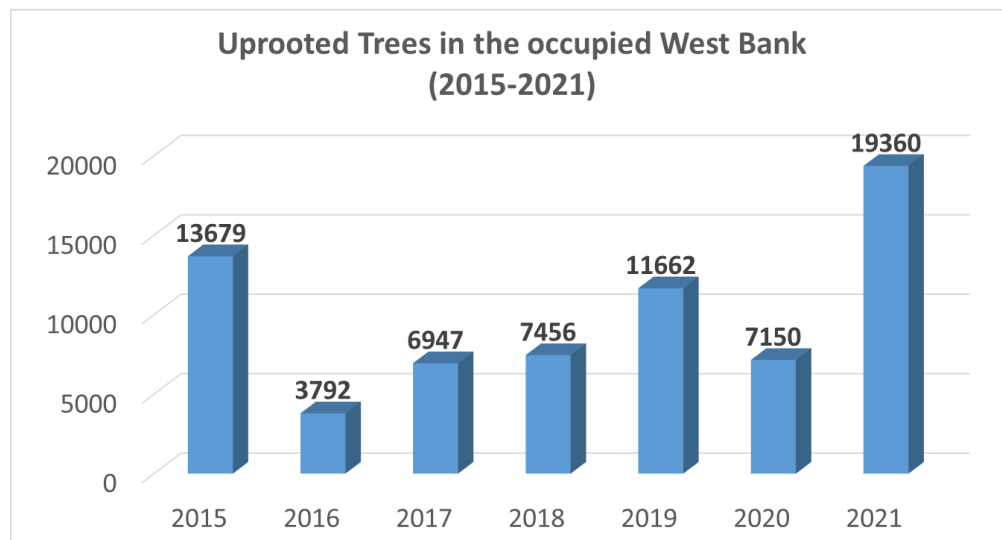


Chart (2) Uprooted Trees in the occupied West Bank (2015-2021)

Since the beginning of the second Intifada in late September 2000, Israeli settlers, and guarded by the Israeli occupation Army (IOA) have committed major attacks against Palestinian citizens in the oPt, including violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The destruction of hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinian civilian facilities, including houses, factories, workshops, animal sheds, lands, has

resulted in significant financial losses, which severely affected and will likely continue to affect Palestinians' economic situation.

It is worth recalling that in September 2020, the so-called "Israel Defense Forces" issued new military orders to confiscate more Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank. The new Israeli military orders (213 orders) targeted six Palestinian governorates in the occupied West Bank, with a total area of 35,388 dunums. 49.4% (17,462 dunums) of the Palestinian lands targeted by the military orders are Olive fields, which are a source of livelihood for tens or even hundreds of Palestinian families in the occupied West Bank. The issuance of the Israeli military orders coincided with the beginning of the olive harvest season in the occupied West Bank. The targeted lands are located in close proximity of Israeli settlements and outposts, and usually witness tensions between Israeli settlers residing in these settlements and Palestinian land owners with the aim of preventing their access to their lands and picking their olive Trees.

To sum up,

For Palestinians, olive trees are more than just a source of income. They are not just any ordinary trees; they represent Palestinians' commitment to their homeland. These drought-resistant trees can grow and bear fruit for years, exactly as how Palestinians have been planted in their land resisting all sources of occupation. Therefore, Israeli settlers use the destruction of olive trees as just another method of forcibly removing Palestinians from their homeland.