

Yitzhar – A Case Study

Settler violence as a vehicle for taking over
Palestinian land with state and military backing



August 2018

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Position paper, August 2018

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Cover photo: Hate graffiti on a house in 'Urif: "Here live enemies – expel or kill", June 2018
(Photo: Yesh Din).

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INTRODUCTION

This position paper addresses daily life in six Palestinian villages near Nablus: **Burin, Huwarah, Madama, 'Urif, Einabus** and **'Asirah al-Qibliyah**. In 1983, the settlement of Yitzhar was built on top of a mountain located in the center of these villages' farmlands. Over the years, at least eight outposts have been built around Yitzhar. In 1999, the unauthorized outpost of Giv'at Ronen was built just east of the village of Burin and near the settlement of Har Bracha. The presence of Israeli settlers and the violence they practice have completely transformed the lives of the Palestinian residents.

Unfortunately, the patterns described in this document are nothing new. They have been in place ever since the earliest settlements were established and discussed in publications put out by Yesh Din and other human rights organizations. However, **Yitzhar – A Case Study**, puts the spotlight on a relatively small area and what took place there over a short period of time, and may shed light on the phenomena as a whole, which, to varying degrees, occurs throughout the West Bank. This focus helps demonstrate how violence by Israelis in the occupied territory, backed by the state and the military, serves as a tool for seizing control of West Bank land, dramatically disrupts the lives of Palestinians, and violates their rights.

The position paper focuses on 40 incidents documented by Yesh Din between January 2017 and March 2018 in which settlers and other Israeli civilians caused bodily harm or property damage to residents of the six villages. Two more cases concern suspected offenses committed by soldiers against Palestinians. The document presents quotes from interviews held by Yesh Din volunteers and field researchers with Palestinian victims of violence. The analysis focuses on four main topics: property damage and bodily harm; time and space; military involvement; and law enforcement on Israelis suspected of harming Palestinians.

As a rule, the violence described in this document originates from the settlement of Yitzhar and its many satellite outposts, as well as the outpost of Giv'at Ronen. While it is impossible to ascertain exactly where the assailants live, given that the violence is perpetrated by Israeli citizens in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and originates in settlements and outposts, we use the term "settler violence".

There are various reasons and objectives for this violence against Palestinians. These include religious zealotness, crimes motivated by hate or pure racism, acts of vengeance following violence from Palestinians or enforcement actions against settlers by the military and police. The main goal, however, appears to be dispossessing the Palestinians of their land and expanding the area under Israeli control in the West Bank.

Settler violence against Palestinians, also referred to as ideologically or nationalistically motivated crime, does not take place in a vacuum. Israel's motivation to [increase its hold](#)

[on Palestinian land](#) in the West Bank, which it has kept under military rule for more than 51 years, matches the settlers' agenda. It should therefore come as no surprise that state authorities protect settlers, back them and promote their interests.

Through the [Civil Administration](#), Israel declares land in the OPT as public land (or state land), allocates it exclusively for building settlements and provides these settlements with funding, access roads, infrastructure, and no less significantly – legitimacy and normalcy. While Israel considers many structures within settlements and outposts to be illegal, it avoids implementing its own decisions, and even takes action to [retroactively approve illegal construction and outposts](#). In addition, while Israel declares it is opposed to settler violence against Palestinians, it fails to take action to prevent it, and if this was not enough, settler violence is often aided by Israeli military involvement.

Israel's policy of acceptance and even support for the settlers, greenlights continued violence that dispossesses Palestinians in the West Bank and severely violates their human rights.

Background

Yesh Din documents incidents in which Israeli civilians (settlers and others), soldiers or police officers harm Palestinians and their property in the West Bank. Given the extremely large number of incidents, and the limited resources available to Yesh Din, our data does not include all offenses committed by settlers and members of the security forces against Palestinians in the OPT. However, our data does constitute a broad sample enabling analysis and conclusions with respect to the essence of such offenses and the impact they have.

Settler violence toward Palestinians began as settlements began to be built and takes place throughout the West Bank.¹ Over the course of the decade spanning from January 2008 to March 2018, Yesh Din documented **275 incidents of suspected offenses committed by Israeli civilians** against residents of the Palestinian villages of Burin, Huwarah, Madama, 'Urif, Einabus and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah. The incidents include severe physical violence; torching of homes, cars and fields; slaughtering of livestock; uprooting and cutting trees; theft of livestock, movable property and crops; vandalization of property and hate graffiti (known as “price tag” actions); denial of access to private farmland and road blockages.

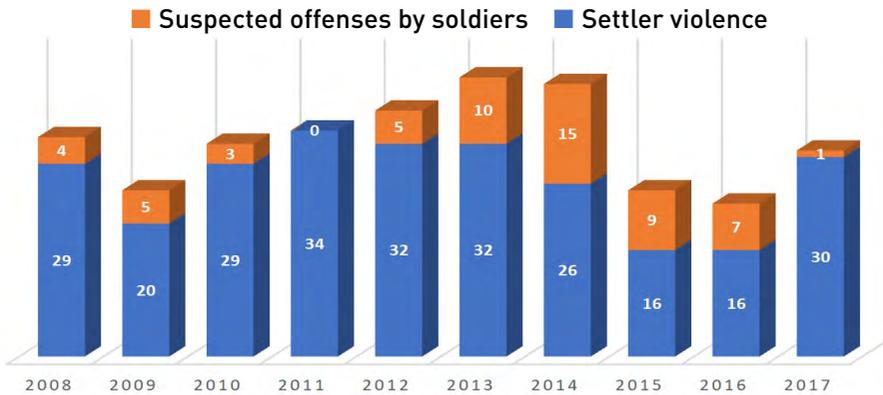
In the same time period, Yesh Din also documented **60 additional incidents of suspected offenses committed by soldiers and police officers** against residents of these villages. The incidents include use of live fire, stun grenades and tear gas canisters; severe physical violence; threats and harassment; nocturnal raids allegedly involving illegal practices; theft of

¹ See, e.g.: Ministry of Justice, [The Investigation of Suspicions against Israelis in Judea and Samaria – Report of Follow-Up Team \(Karp Report\)](#) (May 1982) (Hebrew).

money and movable property from homes; failure to prevent settler violence (“standing idly by”) and even aiding settler violence.

The geographical area where most of the 335 incidents took place spans only 25 square kilometers, less than half a percent of the total area of the West Bank. The incidents took place inside homes, on village streets, and in farmland surrounding them.

A DECADE OF VIOLENCE



The illustration relates only to offenses against residents of Burin, Huwarah, Madama, 'Urif, Einabus and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah, and covers only incidents documented by Yesh Din rather than all incidents that occurred in the time and place covered.

About the villages

The Palestinian villages of Burin (بورين), Huwarah (حواره), Madama (مادما), 'Urif (عوريف), Einabus (عينابوس) and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah (عصيرة القبليية) are located at the bottom of Jabal (Mount) Salman, south of the city of Nablus. These communities have been continuously settled for hundreds of years, some of them for thousands. The total population of all six villages put together is about 21,000,² and most residents make their living in commerce, services and traditional farming, mostly growing olives, almonds and grape vines and raising sheep and goats. Huwarah, which is located on the main traffic artery in the area, Road 60, connecting between Nablus, Ramallah and Jerusalem, also has a commercial center. In 1995, following the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians (the Oslo Accord), the built-up areas of these villages were declared Area B, meaning the Palestinian Authority has control over civilian affairs, while Israel maintains control over security affairs.

² State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, [Preliminary Results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017](#), pp. 68-70.

I am 57 years old. I inherited the plot from my father, and he inherited it from his father [...] I have the ownership documents for it [...] Before Yitzhar we would cultivate the entire area, except the area around the Salman al-Farsi grave, which is located in a rocky area. We used to pray at the grave too. [...] The last time I went to the plot was around 2000. I have not been there since, because settlers took it over and put up caravans there.³



Jabal Salman before the establishment of Yitzhar and its satellite outposts (1982). The Tomb of Salman al-Farsi, now located in the center of the settlement of Yitzhar, appears in the center of the photo, surrounded by cultivated farmland belonging to Palestinian villages. (Photo courtesy of Peace Now)

3 M.S., resident of 'Urif, April 2017 (File 3875/17). All interviews quoted in this position paper were conducted in Arabic and translated by Yesh Din staff members. According to Muslim tradition, Salman al-Farsi was a confidant of the Prophet Muhammad.

The settlement of Yitzhar

The settlement of Yitzhar began as a "Nahal settlement" built on the summit of Jabal Salman in 1983, on farmland belonging to the six Palestinian villages located around the mountain. Israel declared some of this farmland as public land.⁴ In July 1984, by government resolution, Yitzhar was turned into a civilian community, making it an official settlement. Beginning in the late 1990s, at least eight unauthorized outposts were built around Yitzhar: Mitzpe Yitzhar, Giv'at Lehava, Giv'at Tekuma, Havat HaShaked, Shalhevet, Shalhevet Ya, Meged Shamayim and Kumi Ori,⁵ which were built in part on privately owned Palestinian land.⁶

About 200 families live in Yitzhar and its satellite outposts. According to Israeli military data, more than 220 structures in Yitzhar and its surrounding outposts were built illegally.⁷ The area where Yitzhar is located was determined as Area C under the Oslo Accord, meaning it is under full Israeli control.

The Od Yosef Hai yeshiva has been running out of the settlement of Yitzhar since 2000 (occupying a building that was itself built illegally and condemned for demolition by the military back in 1999⁸). The yeshiva's leadership includes Rabbi Yizchak Shapiro, who authored a book entitled *Torat Hamelech* that contains an entire chapter on deliberate harm to innocent people who are not Jewish, and Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburg, who authored a book entitled *Baruch Hagever*, praising Baruch Goldstein, who murdered 29 Muslim worshippers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.⁹ The police arrested many of the yeshiva's students over the

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- 4 Public Land (State Land): Land registered in the land registry as government property on behalf of the Jordanian Kingdom and land that was declared by the Israeli military governorate as public land that is not privately owned. This land is administered by the military governorate and is intended to serve the public. The vast majority of public land has been allocated by the military to serve Israeli settlements.
 - 5 For the sake of simplicity, we will sometimes refer to the settlement of Yitzhar and its satellite outposts as Yitzhar.
 - 6 All settlements and outposts in the West Bank were built in contravention of the international law. Article 49 of [the Fourth Geneva Convention](#) (1949) prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its population into the occupied territory. Israel's Supreme Court avoided deliberating on this issue on the grounds that it was an essentially political issue and therefore "non-justiciable" ([HCJ 4481/91 Bargil v. Government of Israel](#), [1992-4] IsrLR 158, Judgment, August 25, 1993). The Government of Israel, therefore, treats settlements like Yitzhar, built with government approval, as legal. Outposts are built without official government approval and Israel acknowledges their illegality. For more see Yesh Din, [From Occupation to Annexation - The Silent Adoption of the Levy Report on Retroactive Authorization of Illegal Construction in the West Bank](#) (February 2016).
 - 7 Information given to Yesh Din by the Civil Administration in response to an application made under the Freedom of Information Act, March 2017.
 - 8 Chaim Levinson, "[State Issues Demolition Order for Yitzhar Settlement Yeshiva](#)", [Haaretz English website](#), May 9, 2010.
 - 9 For more on the yeshiva's leadership see: Chaim Levinson, "[Rabbi Itzik Shapiro, Head of Od Yosef Hai Arrested on Suspicion of Arson of Yasuf Mosque](#)", [Haaretz](#), January 19, 2010 (Hebrew); Baruch Kra and Gideon Alon, "[Rabbi Ginzburg Accused of Incitement to Racism](#)", [Walla](#), July 3, 2003 (Hebrew).

years on suspected violence against Palestinians and Israeli security forces. From April 2014 to June 2015, the military went so far as to seize the area occupied by the yeshiva, due to “operational considerations, as it serves as the headquarters out of which violent attacks against nearby Palestinian villages and security forces are launched”.¹⁰

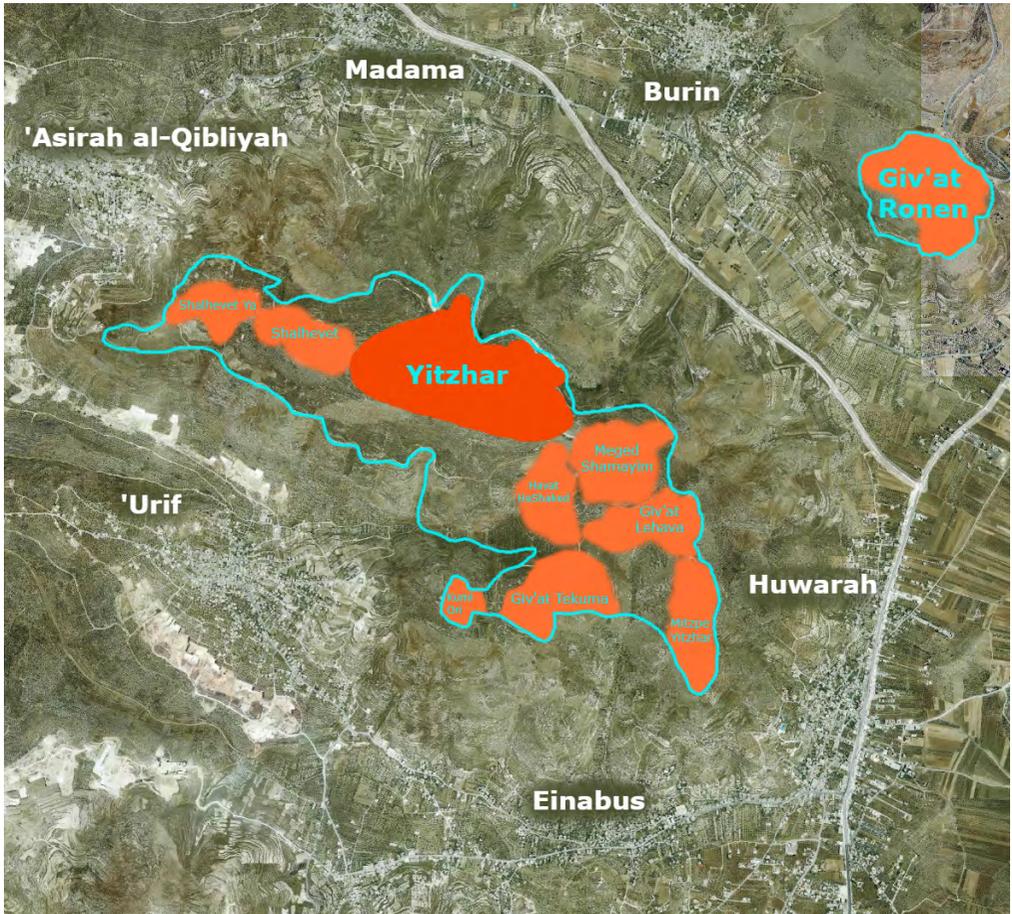
There are countless media reports concerning violence against Palestinians and members of the Israeli security forces originating in the settlement of Yitzhar. In 2012, Head of the Israel Security Agency, Yoram Cohen said: “Several dozen activists, mainly located in Yitzhar [...] have decided to take the road of terror and to terrorize and intimidate successive Israeli governments [...] because they can't harm the government and the Israel Defense Forces, they lash out at Arabs and [their] sacred symbols. [...] We treat this as terror. These are terrorist actions”.¹¹ In July 2018, after settlers threw stones in Yitzhar, injuring a Border Police officer, Minister of Defense Avigdor Lieberman described the assailants as: “A deranged group of barbarians”.¹²

The outpost of Giv'at Ronen

The illegal outpost of Giv'at Ronen was built in 1999 atop Jabal Abu Isma'il, a few hundred meters away from the homes of Burin. The outpost, also known as “Giv'at Sne Ya'akov”, is located within the jurisdiction of the settlement of Har Bracha and has a population of about 25 families. It was built without the approval of the Israeli government, does not have an approved outline plan and all structures in it were built illegally.¹³

Violence originating from the outpost has not escaped the notice even of members of the secretariat of the nearby settlement of Har Bracha, who reportedly decided to cut off the outpost's water supply as a punitive measure after outpost residents threw stones at cars belonging to Palestinian laborers who work in the settlement.¹⁴

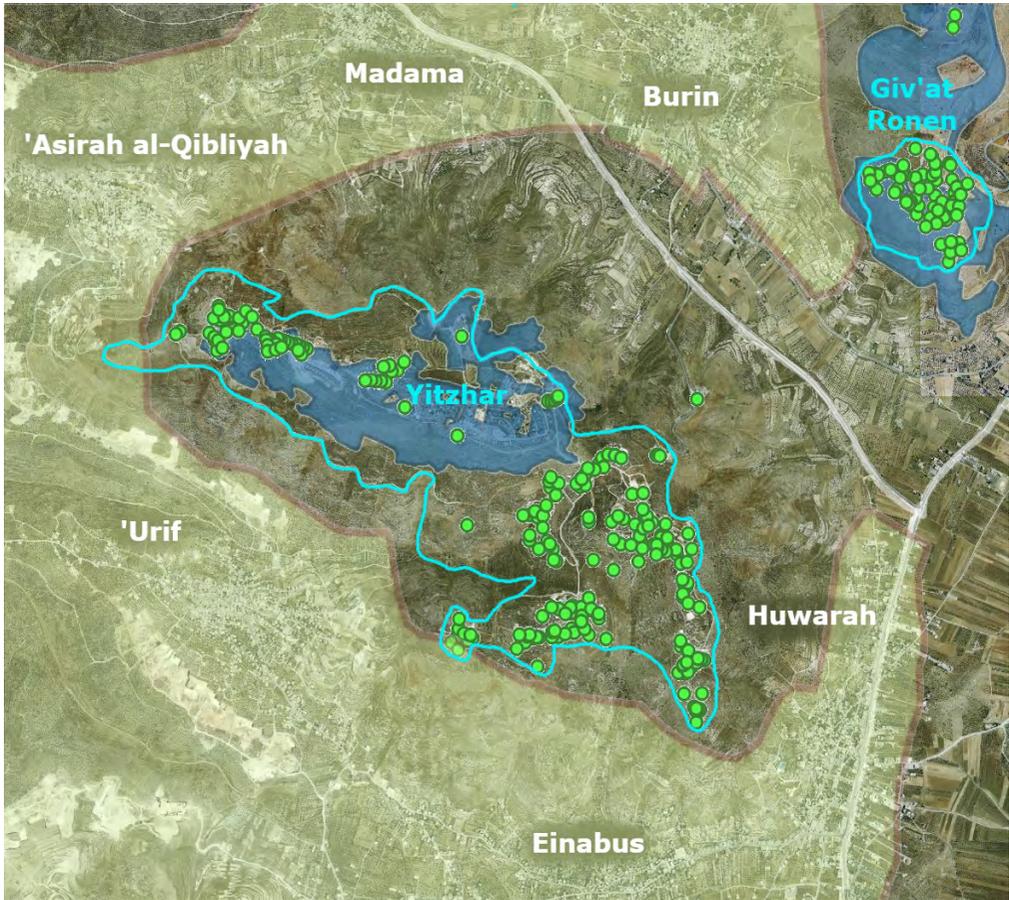
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- 10 Yoav Zitun, “[IDF takes over extremist yeshiva in Yitzhar](#)”, [www.ynetnews.com](#), November 4, 2014.
 - 11 Barak Ravid, “[Shin Bet Chief: Iran Trying to Hit Israeli Targets in Response to Attacks on Nuclear Scientists](#)”, [Haaretz English website](#), February 3, 2012. Full quote appears in the [Hebrew version](#) of the story.
 - 12 Elisha Ben Kimon, “[Settlers attack Border Police near Yitzhar, one hurt](#)”, [www.ynetnews.com](#), July 18, 2018. Lieberman's statement is quoted only in the [Hebrew version](#) of the story.
 - 13 Ministry of Defense, [Spiegel Report](#) (2007) (Hebrew), q.v. “Bracha B – [Ronen] Arusi's Farm”, pp. 44-54 (comprehensive database compiled by a Ministry of Defense team headed by Brig. Gen. [reserves] Baruch Spiegel) (from the Peace Now website).
 - 14 Netael Bendel, “[Collective Punishment: Har Bracha shuts down water to Sneh Ya'akov neighborhood](#)”, [Kipa](#), September 2, 2012 (Hebrew).



Legend¹⁵

-  Yitzhar built-up area
-  Outpost built-up area
-  Orbital round encircling settlement and outposts

¹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, maps in this position paper are laid on top of aerial photographs from 2016. The maps were prepared by Yesh Din. GIS provided to Yesh Din by Civil Administration in March 2017 under Freedom of Information Act.



-  Blue area: Land declared by Israel as state land
-  Yellow area: Area B (area not marked yellow is Area C)
-  Green dots: Illegal structures with pending demolition orders from the Civil Administration.

PROPERTY DAMAGE AND BODILY HARM

The violence inflicted by settlers and other Israelis arriving from Yitzhar and Giv'at Ronen against residents of the six nearby Palestinian village takes a variety of forms and methods and is directed toward bodily harm and property damage. As stated, it involves severe physical violence, the torching of homes and movable property, the slaughter of livestock and the uprooting and cutting of trees and other agricultural crops.

According to the interpretation given by Israel to the Ottoman land laws that are still in effect in the West Bank, cessation of cultivation for an extended period of time could result in loss of title to the land and paves the way for Israel to declare it public land and allocate it to settlements.¹⁶ Settler violence acts as a deterrent and produces terror and fear that keep Palestinians from accessing their lands. In this way, the violence serves as a tool for taking control of land and handing it over to Israelis.

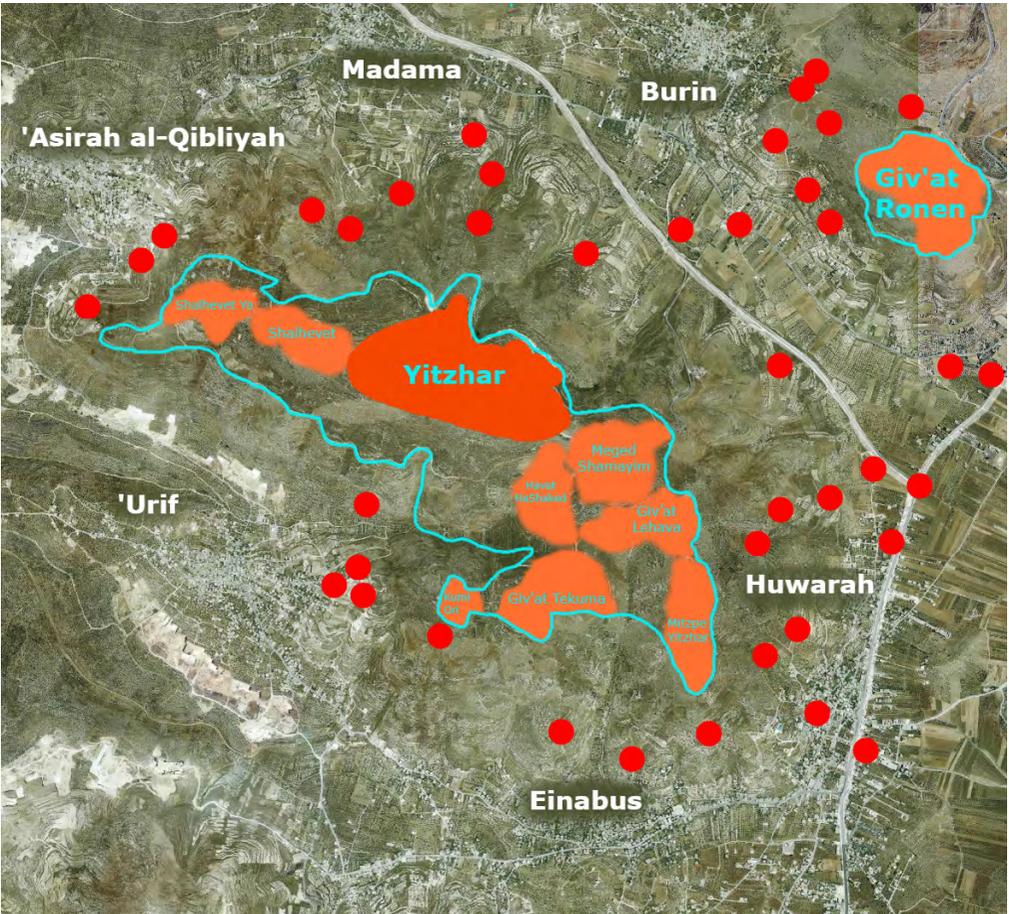
I have a plot of land, five dunams, on the edge of the settlement. I have not gone to this land for more than ten years. I do not cultivate it. I do not harvest olives. I am fearful of settler violence. During the olive harvest, we are not allowed to access even with coordination. Years ago, settlers fired shots in my direction when I was grazing the flock on our land below Yitzhar.¹⁷

I am a resident of the village of Einabus [...] We have a digger and I use it wherever needed. Last Tuesday [...] I went up to work for the village council, building a dirt road. I had another man with me. [...] About 40 settlers came down toward us from the direction of Yitzhar. Aside from three of them, all were masked and held Molotov cocktails, large knives and sticks. They came all the way up to the digger. The first stone broke the cab window. [...] We stayed inside the digger because we were afraid to come out. They would have killed us. They continued throwing stones at us. A group of about 15 settlers jumped on the digger. [...] A settler got near me. He climbed on the digger, on top of the cab. He opened the door and tried to stab me. I pushed him up and he jumped back up on the digger and tried to stab me. This happened three times. The friend who was sitting next to me was hit by five or six stones in the face and legs. He started bleeding. We could not call the village to call for help. We were inside the cab, feeling like we were going to die. All the glass parts of the cab broke. I locked the door from the inside. [...] When they were not paying

¹⁶ For more see: B'Tselem, [Under the Guise of Legality: Israel's Declarations of State Land in the West Bank](#) (February 2012), pp. 26-28.

¹⁷ M.A., resident of Huwarah, February 2017 (File 3818/17).

attention, we jumped out the back window and fled with 15 settlers chasing us. [...] We went down toward the village and we could see the settlers banging on the digger, which stayed out in the field, destroying it.¹⁸



● Red dots: Settler violence against Palestinians documented by Yesh Din, January 2017 to March 2018

18 A.H., resident of Einabus, March 2018 (File 4076/18).

The location of the incidents depicted on the map clearly illustrates that all forty documented violent incidents took place outside the area of the settlement and outposts. In other words, the attacks were perpetrated in Palestinian farmland or inside the built-up area of the villages, which settlers entered deliberately.

I am 69 years old. I have several sheep at home, and before I was hurt, I would take them out to graze here, near my house, every day. I use them to make cheese and milk for my household. I usually take them out to graze in the afternoon and stay near the houses in Huwarah for fear of the settlers. Last year, settlers came down five times and tried to attack me with stones.¹⁹

“But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exodus, 20:9)

The official website of the settlement of Yitzhar boasts that “The work of God is a central tenet of community life in Yitzhar, and features in both cultural events held in the community as well as in its daily life”,²⁰ An analysis of the cases documented by Yesh Din reveals another significant aspect of Sabbath community activity in Yitzhar – violence against Palestinians. Seven of the forty violent attacks that took place in the period of time covered in this position paper and originated from the direction of Yitzhar and Giv’at Ronen occurred on a Saturday.

On Saturday, January 13, 2018, I was working in my storage space, fixing equipment. It was sometime between 2:30 and 3:00 PM. Suddenly I heard my wife screaming. The storage space is about 20 meters away from the house. When I heard my wife, I went out to see what was happening. I saw a large group of settlers, more than 30 people maybe, near the storage space. Some of them were masked. Others were not. They began throwing stones at me. I was hurt in the left arm, the left leg, the chest and the head. They came up to a distance of about eight meters away from me. There were older ones and younger ones among them. I did not see soldiers in the area. I tried to escape so they would not hurt me. The neighbors, who live about 100 meters away from us, began shouting that the settlers had burnt my tractor. I did not care about the tractor at that moment. I just ran. Later, some young people from ‘Urif came. When the settlers saw the young people from ‘Urif coming, and

19 B.A., resident of Huwarah, May 2017 (File 3893/17).

20 [Yitzhar](#) website (Hebrew) (accessed June 2018).

the military arrived too, they cleared out. The tractor was still burning when the soldiers arrived. People from 'Urif put the fire out.²¹



Tractor torched by settlers on a Saturday (Photo: Yesh Din)

21 M.S., resident of 'Urif, January 2018 (File 4048/18).

TIME AND SPACE

The violence coming out of Yitzhar, its surrounding outposts and Giv'at Ronen, is a brutal invasion of Palestinian space. In the early years following Yitzhar's establishment, the physical violence and vandalization of property mostly occurred in Palestinian fields, orchards, vineyards and grazing pastures. As stated, according to Israel's application of the law, prolonged cessation of cultivation can result in a change in the land's proprietary status into public land, which paves the way for its allocation to Israeli settlements. In this sense, on the utilitarian plane, settler violence is aimed at driving Palestinians to reduce cultivation in land they own, even stop it, and in this way dispossess them of these lands and use them to expand Israeli settlements and outposts in the West Bank.

At the turn of the millennium, citing a need to maintain public order and protect Palestinian residents, the military began closing Palestinian farmlands it defined as "friction areas" and denying Palestinian farmers access to their own lands. In other words, instead of enforcing the law and punishing the Israeli offenders, the military helped the violent settlers achieve their goals. In a judgment issued in a petition filed by village leaders, including from Einabus and Burin, the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that: "[T]he military commander should, as a rule, refrain from closing areas in a manner that prevents the Palestinian inhabitants from having access to their land for their own protection".²²

The "coordination mechanism"

Despite the ruling, the military continues to close these farmlands, relying on the fact it had instituted a "coordination mechanism", which is run by the district coordination offices (DCOs) and purportedly designed to allow Palestinian farmers to cultivate their lands. In reality, the military's "coordination mechanism" usually allows Palestinians to reach land they own near settlements (that is, Palestinian owned land near which or on which settlements were built) only twice a year, during the harvest and plowing seasons. Access is granted for a limited and preset number of days, determined according to military needs and subject to military escort.

Before the coordination began, we would go to our land every few weeks – work, weed, fertilize. We would have picnics there with the children and the family. Now it's all over. Aside from the olives and almonds, we also grew wheat, barley, corn and tomatoes. I used to sell my crops, now I have to buy.²³

22 [HCJ 9593/04 Morar v. IDF Commander in Judea and Samaria](#), [2002] (2) IsrLR 56. The petition was filed through The Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Shomrei Mishpat – Rabbis for Human Rights.

23 M.Z., resident of 'Urif, April 2017 (File 3875/17).

Contrary to its purported purpose of protecting Palestinians, in practice, the “coordination mechanism” acts as a tool for placing restrictions on the Palestinian farmers, severely violating their rights to freedom of movement and to property and serving the ideology of Israeli settlement of the land. Firstly, Palestinian farmers are forced to choose crops that do not require constant tending and are unable to maximize the economic potential of their land. Secondly, the lack of access through most of the year, and the absence of constant, continuous cultivation impedes the farmers’ capacity to minimize potential damage caused by extreme weather or fires in their plots. Thirdly, the military often denies Palestinians even the limited access afforded by the “coordination mechanism”.

I have a plot of land below the northern limit of Yitzhar, [...] it has about fifty sixty-year-old olive trees. I can only reach that plot with advance coordination with the DCO, one day for plowing, one day for harvesting. This year, they gave us one day for plowing, but the settlers came down and attacked us, so the military cancelled the coordination and I couldn't plow. They have not coordinated another day with us to this day.²⁴

I am a resident of Huwarah. [...] On Wednesday morning, I went to Nablus. On the way back, I looked over at the mountain and saw the entire hill was burnt, including my plot. [...] During the harvest, we will prune the burnt branches and after the trees recuperate and start growing new branches, which takes about seven years, there will be olives again. Fires spread quickly. Due to fear of settlers and because we get coordination for only one or two days a year, we do not have time to plow, the thorns remain and make it easy for the fire to spread.²⁵

In addition to this, settlers often exploit the Palestinian farmers’ forced absence from their land to destroy and steal crops.

I am married and have three children. We have been suffering from violence from Yitzhar settlers for years, especially in our plots near the settlement [...]. I had sixty to seventy “Roman” olive trees, meaning they were at least 200 years old. In 2003, they cut more than twenty of our trees. Since then, our plot and others in the area have been torched several times. In 2010, there was a large fire and the entire plot burnt down. [...] There was another fire in 2013. The settlers set tires on fire and let them roll down into the plots. The trees catch fire and we are not allowed to go to the area to put out the fire without coordination

24 W.A., resident of Burin, April 2017 (File 3884/17).

25 H.A., resident of Huwarah, June 2017 (File 3932/17).

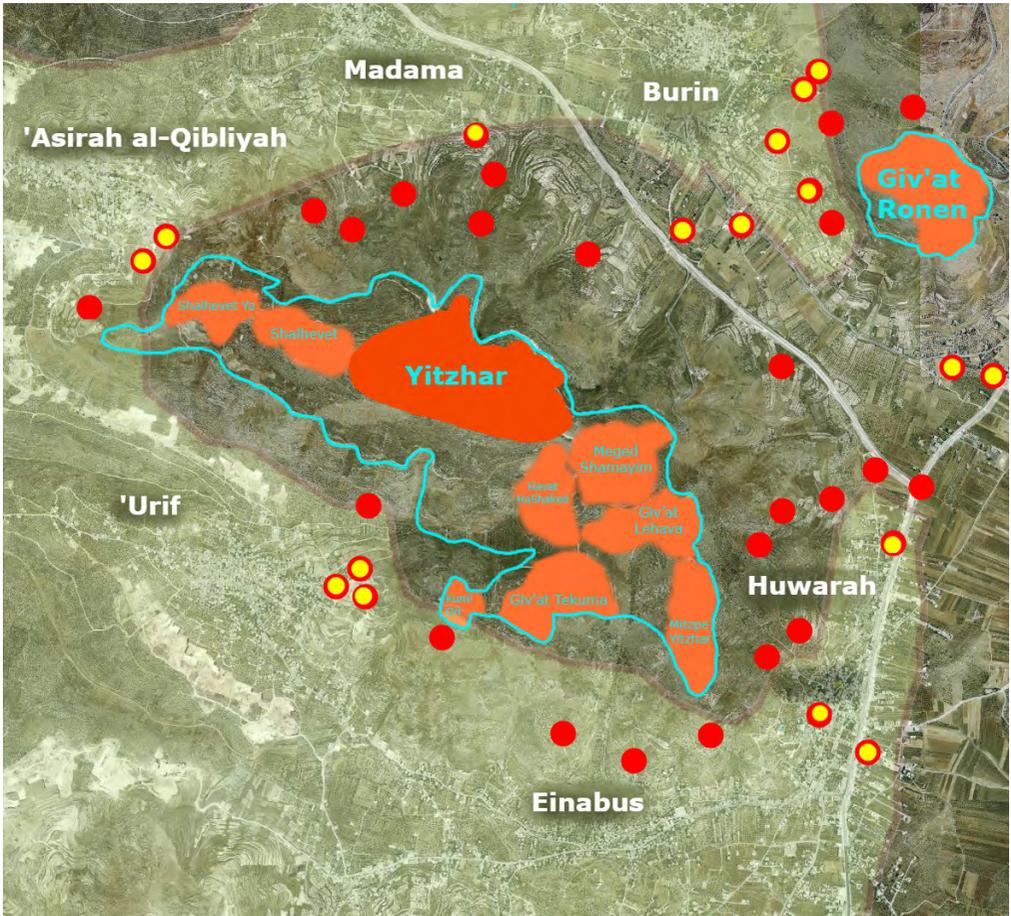
because of the proximity to Yitzhar. [...] We started growing there, but they don't give us enough time to plant and tend to the trees.

We have another plot south of the village [...] with about eighty trees that my grandfather planted forty years ago. We reach it with coordination to harvest and plow, but we do not have enough time to finish the work. in 2009, there was a fire. In the 2016 harvest season, we went to harvest with coordination. Settlers came down on us, and we left in a hurry, leaving behind fruit and tools that were stolen by the settlers. They've just torched the plot again. [A week ago] a neighbor called me and said there was a fire on the south side of the village, close to our land. [...] When I arrived, the fire had already spread to the entire area. All the trees burnt down. [...] I would produce eighteen tins of oil out of that plot, and now it is all lost. We are waiting for coordination again to get into the area. Olive oil is an important part of farmers' lives, and now we even have to buy it for ourselves.²⁶

Private space

In recent years, settler violence has taken deeper root, spreading, on top of farmlands, to Palestinian private spaces – village streets, schools, public buildings and even homes. Seventeen of the forty incidents of violence recorded in the fifteen months covered in this report were attacks carried out by settlers in or around homes inside the villages. These attacks occurred in all hours of the day – eleven during daylight hours and six in the evening and night. The map shows that about half the attacks took place in Area B, another indicator of the pervasiveness of settler violence.

26 M.W., resident of Burin, June 2017 (File 3943/17).



- Red dots: Settler violence against Palestinians documented by Yesh Din from January 2017 to March 2018
- Yellow dots: Settler violence against Palestinians in or around homes
- Yellow area: Area B

I am a resident of 'Asirah al-Qibliyah. My family has lived in the village for many years. [...] my neighbors and I suffer from ongoing violence by settlers who come down from Yitzhar. [...] We built a concrete wall at the edge of our garden, with a fence on it, to prevent direct attacks on the house. In addition, all the windows are fitted with metal grates to protect from stones. I live on the first floor with my wife and children. I have six children. My eldest son lives on the second floor with his wife and children.

[On Saturday, a week ago] at around 10:30 at night, I saw many settlers arriving at the hill. [...] Then, it literally rained stones on the house, while we were all inside. My two sons went up to the roof. I went into the garden and saw dozens of settlers dressed in black. We started shouting and throwing stones back at them, but at that point there were too few of us, until more village residents came about half an hour later. The settlers damaged my car, which was parked on the side of the road. They tried to set it on fire using a lighter, but were unsuccessful, and then they broke the rear window, the two side windows and all the lights. [...] When people from the village started coming in their cars, honking their horns, the settlers drew back and started toward Yitzhar. Then, the civilian security coordinator and the soldiers advanced into the village and started shooting tear gas and flares. No one was hurt by the tear gas. One resident was hurt by a stone. The military did not help us. There was no damage to the house because, as I said, all the windows have grates. It was my car that was damaged, but the children suffer emotionally, especially at night. If there is a noise, they cry and grow anxious. At around half past midnight, two military jeeps came into the village and announced on loudspeakers they were putting the village under curfew until 5:00 AM.²⁷

The escalation in settler violence clearly exacerbates the harm done to Palestinians. This harm extends beyond property damage and bodily injuries. The settlers' invasion of Palestinians' most private sanctuaries, and the ever-present threat of such invasions, take a heavy emotional and mental toll. The home is a safe haven, supplying the family with a roof over their heads and physical protection and fostering a sense of kinship. The home is where important psychological needs are met: privacy, the differentiation between self and the outer world; release; recuperation; a space where one can let down guards and defenses and engage in intimate rites that leave one exposed such as sleeping and dreaming, eating, bathing and playing. The home is where parents can give their children a sense of physical and emotional security and a stable environment for growth and development. When parents are stripped of their ability to maintain the stability and safety of the home, children's mental health is at risk.²⁸

²⁷ A.A., resident of 'Asirah al-Qibliyah, July 2017 (File 3956/17).

²⁸ For more see: [Born Equal](#).

I am a resident of Burin. I live here with my wife and three children – the eldest is seven and the youngest is three. Settlers from Giv'at Ronen come to our house occasionally and throw stones at us. Soldiers come with them and they shoot tear gas canisters at our house and at the neighborhood. These settlers and soldiers come very close to our house, and then, if we can, we get out and escape. If we cannot escape, we stay inside. [...] I do 48-hour shift work, so I am away from home for two nights in a row every time. When I am away, I make arrangements for a man to stay in the house, like my wife's brother or other relatives. I am afraid to leave the house empty too. [...] The situation became worse in 2015, and then the French humanitarian organization PUI put up the money to build a barbed wire fence around our house to keep settlers from getting into the yard and the house itself. I also installed metal grates on all the windows to prevent damage from stones and tear gas cannisters from getting into the house and burning it.

This violence is very harmful to us. It ruins our lives here – especially the children's, who live in constant fear and anxiety. [...] They never play in the yard, only indoors, and my daughter does not come home from school alone either. She goes to her grandparents' house and we pick her up from there.²⁹



A stone thrown by settlers on M.A.'s family home (Photo: Yesh Din)

29 M.A., resident of Burin, May and December 2017 (Files 3912/17 and 4031/17).

MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

Settler violence originating in Yitzhar and Giv'at Ronen does not take place in a country without laws. The West Bank is an occupied territory that has been under Israeli military rule for more than 51 years. The commander of the Israeli military's Central Command acts as the military commander of the West Bank, and the soldiers are tasked with maintaining public order and safety in the occupied territory in an impartial manner. The powers and obligations the military has as the agency in charge of law enforcement and public order are anchored in the provisions of international law, the rulings of Israel's Supreme Court and military orders.³⁰

The military takes the position that soldiers in the West Bank, "Have broad powers to carry out their task in terms of law enforcement", and that they, "receive instructions to exercise their powers [...] in every incident they encounter in which they are in a position to make an impact, including cases of violence from extreme groups, hostile terrorist activities, 'price tag' incidents and other nationalistic crime".³¹ Accordingly, military orders clarify the powers and duties soldiers have to protect Palestinian residents.

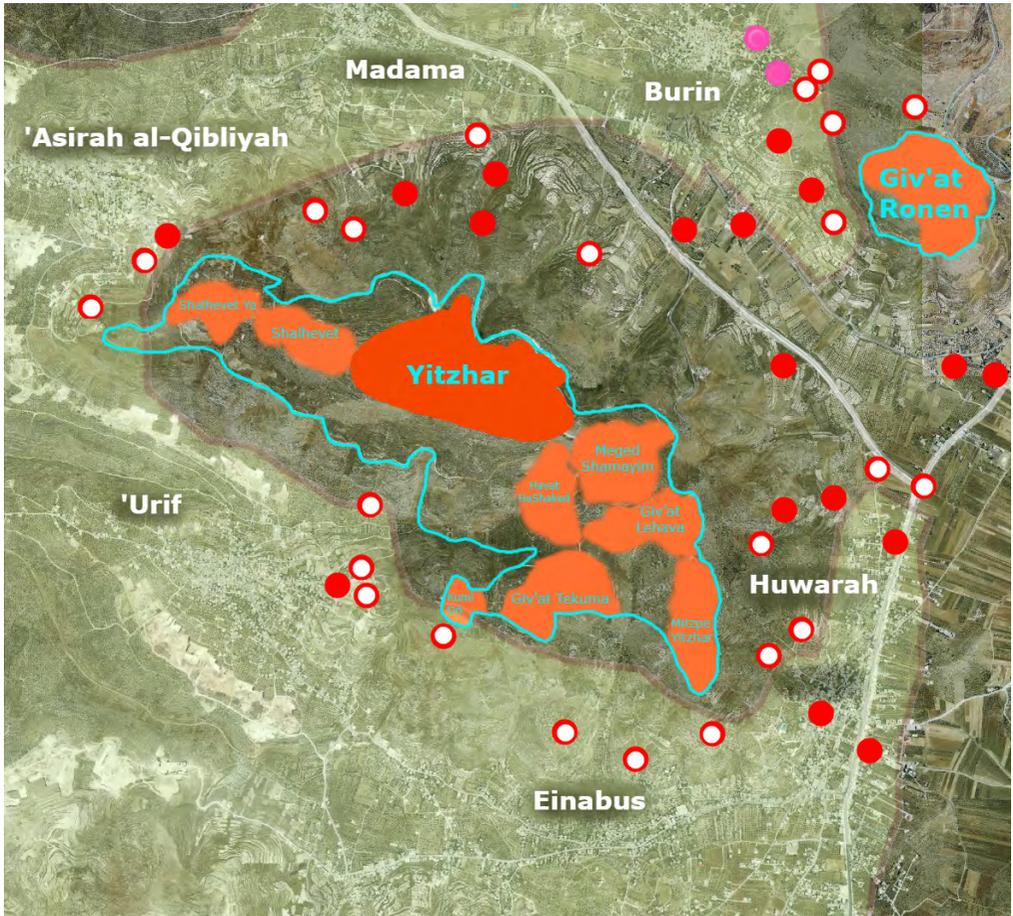
And yet, there is significant affinity and mutual sympathy between settlers and Israeli soldiers, some of whom are settlers themselves. Additionally, the tasks given to soldiers and mainly, the organizational culture, or unspoken code, within the military, all the way to the highest command and the political leadership, are geared toward protecting and helping the settlers only.

Military involvement was recorded in 26 of the 40 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians presented in this document, with soldiers supporting and helping the assailing settlers rather than the Palestinian victims. In 12 cases, soldiers used crowd control weapons against Palestinians; in 10 cases, soldiers present at the scene "stood idly by" refraining from taking the action required of them to prevent the settlers from harming Palestinians; and in 13 cases, a civilian security coordinator was present on scene, and sometimes actively involved in the attack. The data indicates combined involvement in some cases.

In addition, during the period covered in this position paper, January 2017 to March 2018, Yesh Din documented two cases of suspected offenses against Palestinians by soldiers, with no connection to settler violence.

30 For more on the division of powers between the military and the police with respect to law enforcement in the West Bank, see: Yesh Din, [Mock Enforcement: The Failure to Enforce the Law on Israeli Civilians in the West Bank](#) (May 2015).

31 Affidavit of Lieut. Col. Kfir Cohen, Operations Officer, Judea and Samaria Area Brigade, January 19, 2015 (included in Notice and Response on behalf of the State submitted to the Jerusalem Magistrates Court in a civil suit brought by Fadel Hamed Mahmoud 'Amour, CC 61685-06-13). For more see: Yesh Din, [Standing Idly By: IDF soldiers' Inaction in the Face of Offenses Perpetrated by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank](#) (May 2015) pp. 19-24.



- Red dots: Settler violence against Palestinians documented by Yesh Din from January 2017 to March 2018
- White dots: Settler violence against Palestinians with military involvement
- Purple dots: Suspected offenses committed by soldiers (with no settler involvement)

Use of crowd control measures

Settler violence often develops into clashes and mutual stone throwing with Palestinians. As noted, the location of these incidents, inside Palestinian villages or on Palestinian farmland, indicates that in the vast majority of the cases covered in this document, stone throwing on the part of the Palestinians, when it occurs, is an act of self-defense in response to premediated attacks by settlers.

Such clashes often end when the military intervenes. However, in all 12 incidents covered in this position paper in which soldiers used crowd control measures, they were always aimed at Palestinians and never used against the assailing Israeli civilians (to Yesh Din's knowledge, with rare exceptions, the same holds true in all similar incidents in the West Bank).

Testimonies given to *Breaking the Silence* by soldiers corroborate this information and expose the gap between the military's power to address settler violence and the orders soldiers actually receive:

You're supposed to protect these people [the settlers], who hurt you, and when they hurt you, there is no protocol on how you're supposed to handle them. If an Arab were to do it, I'd know full well what I can do. I can arrest him. I can throw some crowd control measures at him. When it's a Jew who does it, I can stand there, wait for the police, the Border Police, as helpless as it gets, and then after that, I'm still supposed to protect him. You often feel like you're protecting the Arabs from the Jews and not the other way around, when we stand right between Yitzhar and Burin, especially Burin and Madama, and you really feel that the threat is coming more from Yitzhar.³²

The military, which is tasked with enforcing the law and keeping residents of the occupied territory safe, refrains from exercising its powers against the settlers who launch the attacks. Instead, it uses stun grenades and tear gas cannisters against the Palestinians only, acting as yet another arm used to harm them.

I am a resident of Einabus, a farmer and herder. My flock is how I provide for my family. Last Friday, I went out to pasture at around nine in the morning. I was about 300 meters away from the last house in the village, with my three sons. We saw a group of 20 or 22 settlers coming down from the direction of Yitzhar. There were about five or six soldiers with them. The settlers began throwing stones at me, at my children and at the flock. I dialed 100, the police, straight away. The Samaria police answered and took down the information and my phone number. They said they were sending the army to the scene [...]. The

32 Nahal soldier testimony from 2014, [Breaking the Silence website](#) (Hebrew).

stone throwing continued for about fifteen more minutes and then the soldiers came. We thought they were coming to help us, but they started firing tear gas at us and at the flock, while the settlers kept coming closer and continued to throw stones. The soldiers who came did nothing about it.

I phoned my brother and told him stones were being thrown at us. He came with some other people from the village. [...] The stone throwing continued for about an hour, while the soldiers fired tear gas. [...] About ten of my sheep miscarried because of the tear gas. I was hit by a stone in the left leg. [...] My brother was hit by a stone in the left eye [...] My children were not hit by the stones but did suffer from the gas. A friend of mine, **A.R.**, who came to help me, was shot by the soldiers in the abdomen with a rubber bullet.

A.R.: The settlers stood in a cluster and threw stones at village residents. [...] The soldiers separated between the residents and the settlers and prevented village residents from climbing the hill using tear gas and stun grenades. I approached the group of soldiers, to speak with one of them [...] As I was having the conversation, one of the soldiers who was standing a little far from us gave the soldier I was speaking with a stun grenade, and the soldier threw it at my feet. I kicked it to get it away from me, while getting away from there. At that point, I felt a strong blow in the abdomen [...] after a while, I began having severe pain and had difficulty breathing. Some people from Einabus got me off the mountain and drove me to the hospital [...] I was taken into the operating room immediately, put under anesthesia and underwent a four-hour surgery. It turned out I had been hit in the abdomen by a rubber bullet.³³

Standing idly by

Another common occurrence associated with soldiers' actions that has been reported in no less than one quarter of the cases covered in this document is what is known as standing idly by. In 2015, Yesh Din released a comprehensive report on incidents in which soldiers witness violent offenses committed by settlers against Palestinians causing property damage or bodily harm and do nothing to stop it.³⁴ In such incidents, soldiers refrain from exercising the powers they have to detain and arrest the persons involved, to secure the scene in order to enable an investigation that includes collecting findings and evidence and later give statements to the police about the incident. The soldiers' abdication of these responsibilities and the fact that the military takes no action against them reflects another aspect of the policy of tolerating and supporting settler crime.

33 N.A. and A.R., residents of Einabus, March 2018 (File 4081/18).

34 Yesh Din, [Standing Idly By: IDF Soldiers' Inaction in the Face of Offenses Perpetrated by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank](#) (May 2015).

I left Madama on Road 60, heading east. [...] I was about 60 meters away from the roundabout when I saw settlers throwing stones at Palestinian cars. [...] At that point, a military jeep was parked in the middle of the roundabout. I saw three or four soldiers standing in the middle of the roundabout. They did nothing. They did not stop the settlers from attacking the Palestinians. I think there were more than forty settlers there.³⁵

We got to the plot at around 10:15 in the morning. Soldiers and settlers were standing on the security road on the hill, about 200-250 meters away from us. There were six or seven military jeeps there, a white Civil Administration jeep and a white jeep belonging to the Yitzhar civilian security coordinator. [...] We worked for about twenty minutes, and then fourteen to fifteen settlers who emerged from in between the soldiers came down toward us. The soldiers did nothing. They came all the way to the plot where we were working and threw stones at us. When they came closer they covered their faces. We hardly managed to run away. I was hit by three stones: in the right leg, in the back and above the right eye. The owner of the plot got hit by a stone in the left leg. The settlers cursed and shouted in Arabic: “Ruh min hon” [Get out of here]. The soldiers remained standing on the hill and did nothing to stop the settlers. The Civil Administration jeep stayed put too. When we saw nothing was being done to stop them, we left the plot.³⁶



Soldiers standing beside an Israeli boy while he's throwing stones at Palestinians. Burin, November 2017 (Taken from a Yesh Din's video)

35 M.N., resident of Madama, March 2017 (File 3844/17).

36 A.A., resident of Burin, March 2017 (File 3873/17).

Civilian security coordinators

Settlement security coordinators, or CSCs, play another major role in violence against Palestinians. CSCs are usually settlers whose salaries are paid by their settlements with funding from the Ministry of Defense. They are trained and armed by the military. Within their jurisdictions, CSCs have policing powers which include the power to detain, search and arrest, including arrest without a warrant using any reasonable means, including force. CSCs are tasked with frontline response to security incidents, until military and police forces arrive at the scene.

In 2014, Yesh Din released a comprehensive report about various issues relating to the role of CSCs in the West Bank and the human rights violations caused to Palestinians in villages near settlements as a result of their activities.³⁷ CSCs operate in an inherent conflict of interest. On the one hand, they are professionally subordinate to the military and tasked with law enforcement. On the other, they are residents and employees of settlements which act as launch sites for violence against Palestinians. According to interviews conducted by Yesh Din, in 13 of the 40 violent incidents covered in this position paper, the Yitzhar CSC was present at the scene, and sometimes actively participated:

Even if there is coordination with the military, the Yitzhar CSC does not let farmers from Einabus work their land near the settlement.³⁸

I am a resident of 'Asirah [...] There is a lot of trouble with the Yitzhar CSC. He comes down to us and disrupts the farmers' work. He walks around in our neighborhoods like some hoodlum. He chases herders away and acts like he is the boss in our area.

[Last Thursday] we went out in the morning. We were a group of about 40 women, men and children. We started plowing and digging holes for planting. At about 9:30-10:00, the Yitzhar CSC arrived in a car with three other settlers. [...] The CSC was armed. He came down toward us alone [...] and told us to clear out. We told him we were not going to leave, that it was our land and that it was Area B and he had no authority to make us leave. He said he was going to get the military. Within 10 minutes, about 20 soldiers arrived [...] and told us to leave the area because it was causing friction with the settlers. [...] The

37 Yesh Din, [The Lawless Zone: The Transfer of Policing Powers and Security Powers to the Civilian Security Coordinators in the Settlements and Outposts](#), (June 2014). In December 2016, Head of Council of Al Khader and Yesh Din filed a petition with the High Court of Justice requesting to exclude private Palestinian land from the jurisdiction of the CSCs (HCJ 10130/16 [Head of Council of Al Khader et al. v. Commander of IDF Forces in the West Bank](#), [Petition for Order Nisi](#) [Hebrew]). The petition is pending.

38 A.H., resident of Einabus, March 2018 (File 4076/18).

DCO officer turned on the GPS and realized we were in Area B. The officer and the CSC got into an argument over the location, whether it was Area B or not. The CSC told the officer more settlers were on their way, that there would be trouble and that he would be responsible if something happened.³⁹

I am a farmer and herder. [...] On Saturday, I left the house at 9:00 AM toward a grazing field below Yitzhar. [...] A white pickup truck approached on the dirt road, and a man with a kippa and a blond beard came out and said he was the Yitzhar CSC. He started shouting. [...] He asked me: "How are you getting back to Burin"? I said: "The way I came. I have no other way". He said: "You are not allowed. Go on to Huwarah and turn around there toward Burin". I did not understand. He repeated in Arabic. He said: "I will get the Yitzhar Zu'aran (hilltop youth) on you and they will beat you up."⁴⁰

Offenses committed by soldiers

In addition to settler violence, life under military occupation in the West Bank means Palestinians are constantly affected by soldiers' presence and subjected to their violence. Yesh Din monitors law enforcement on soldiers suspected of harming Palestinians or their property in the West Bank as part of a long-term project.

Israel rarely considers incidents in which soldiers harm Palestinians to be criminal offenses, excusing and legitimizing them as acts taken "to protect security". The military's law enforcement apparatus orders the Military Police Criminal Investigations Division (MPCID) to open investigations in a fraction of complaints received regarding harm to Palestinians by soldiers, and on the rare occasion that an investigation is opened, the rate of indictment is extremely low.

So, for instance, 79% of the complaints received with respect to suspected offenses by soldiers against Palestinians received by the Military Advocate General's Corps in 2016 were closed without a criminal investigation. In the cases that were investigated by the MPCID between 2011 and 2016, only 3.4% led to indictments.⁴¹

39 A.A., resident of 'Asirah al-Qibliyah, February 2017 (File 3820/17).

40 W.A., resident of Burin, April 2017 (File 3884/17).

41 For the full statistics and analysis see: Yesh Din, [Data Sheet: Law Enforcement on Israeli Soldiers Suspected of Harming Palestinians](#) (March 2018).

Negligible enforcement over the years indicates a systemic trend of soldier impunity which results in continued violence with state backing.

On Friday morning, I arrived at my uncles' home in Burin with my wife and baby boy. About twenty-five members of the extended family came to their house that day. We were planning to have a barbeque, eat kenafeh and smoke the hookah. After the noon prayer, we started preparing the charcoal barbecue. We were sitting on the veranda outside, around the trough. The children were playing in the yard. From where we were sitting, we could see soldiers standing on a hilltop to the south. They smiled at the children in the yard. We finished the meal at around 2:00 P.M. and started getting the hookahs ready. We started smoking, the children were playing, and the soldiers were on the hill.

Suddenly, we saw the soldiers had fired a tear gas cannister that landed in front of the house, maybe four meters from the entrance. The smoke reached us, and we ran inside the house. I was holding my baby close to me, but there was a lot of gas in the house already. When we were inside, the soldiers fired another tear gas cannister that fell close to the entrance. The house was full of gas and full of people. It was difficult to stay there. Most of the people inhaled gas and started coughing.

A Palestinian ambulance came and started helping, giving oxygen to people who were suffering from the gas. I saw the baby was having trouble breathing. The ambulance could not treat everyone. I left the house, and since my car was parked a little farther down the street, I decided to leave with my wife and baby and run to my car.

When I got out of the house, I saw soldiers walking down the lane from the hill toward the house. They got very close to the house. I spoke to them in Arabic. I told them the baby was choking from the gas. The soldier started shouting. I did not understand him. When I heard the soldier shouting, I ran with the baby. The soldiers threw a grenade toward me which exploded at my feet. I kept running and got to our car. [...] We drove to a medical clinic in Nablus. They gave the baby a preliminary examination which lasted an hour, and we went home. The baby's condition did not improve. He did not breath right and cried at night. I took him to Rafidiya Hospital in Nablus at 10:00 P.M.⁴²

42 A.K., a resident of Nablus (File 4070/18). The incident was filmed and posted. See also: Ziv Stahl, "[What happened before in the Burin video](#)", *Haaretz*, March 8, 2018 (Hebrew).

LAW ENFORCEMENT ON ISRAELI CIVILIANS SUSPECTED OF HARMING PALESTINIANS

Monitoring the responses of Israeli law enforcement to crimes perpetrated by settlers and other Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank is a core element of a long-term project implemented by Yesh Din. As part of this project, Yesh Din assists victims who wish to submit complaints to the Israel Police and our legal team follows the progress of police investigations and their outcomes until the conclusion of the legal proceedings, if such are taken.⁴³

Over the course of the decade spanning from January 2008 to March 2018, Yesh Din documented 167 cases in which Palestinians from the villages of Burin, Huwarah, Madama, 'Urif, Einabus and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah filed complaints with the Israel Police over bodily harm or property damage caused by settlers.⁴⁴

As of May 2018, law enforcement agencies have concluded proceedings in 152 of the complaints. Only five cases (3%) resulted in indictments. In 117 (77%) cases, the file was closed on grounds of “offender unknown”, indicating the police found evidence that a criminal offense had been committed but failed to locate and identify the offenders. In 22 (14%) cases, the file was closed on grounds of “insufficient evidence”, which also indicates the police concluded an offense had been committed but failed to collect and consolidate sufficient evidence to prosecute the named suspects.⁴⁵

An analysis of the grounds for closure in files in which the investigation failed to yield an indictment reflects the failure of the police to enforce the law on settlers and prosecute the perpetrators. It is clear that the failure rate of 91% in identifying perpetrators or finding enough evidence to prosecute them does not reflect the real capabilities of the law enforcement agencies operating in the West Bank - the military, the police, the Israel Security Agency and the State Attorney – but rather their lack of motivation.

Criminal sanctions imposed under penal law are intended to prevent or reduce breaches of norms, partly through public and personal deterrence. They also send a message that the conduct of those convicted is morally wrong. Lack of enforcement signals to settlers who

43 For more on law enforcement proceedings and for full statistics on Yesh Din monitoring throughout the West Bank, see: Yesh Din, [Data Sheet: Law Enforcement on Israeli Civilians in the West Bank](#) (December 2017).

44 Of the forty cases of settler violence documented in the short period covered in this position paper, January 2017 – March 2018, complaints were filed only in twelve and all are still being investigated. See Avoiding Complaining below.

45 Five percent of the files were closed on grounds of “absence of criminal culpability” and one percent were closed on grounds of “lack of public interest” – grounds indicating that the police concluded that the circumstances of the case did not warrant prosecution or that no offense had been committed.

commit offenses that they can do so with impunity, giving them a tailwind that allows them to repeat their actions without fear, knowing that the authorities will, ultimately, not indict them.

Avoiding complaints

Yesh Din documents incidents of ideologically motivated crime against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank whether or not the victims choose to file a complaint with the Israel Police. The ongoing failure of law enforcement agencies to prosecute violent settlers, as presented above, has led to mistrust of the Israeli authorities among Palestinian victims. Consequently, over the last few years, there has been a marked decline in the willingness of Palestinian crime victims to file complaints.⁴⁶

Of the 40 cases examined in this document, 27 (62%) Palestinian crime victims were not interested in filing a complaint with the Israel Police over the crime committed against them.⁴⁷ Most said they did not trust law enforcement authorities, some based on their personal or second-hand experience with complaints that went nowhere. Others said they feared filing a complaint would lead to harm to them or their families, in some cases, specifically noting fear of losing permits to work in Israel or in the settlements.

I do not want to file a complaint. I will waste two days and nothing comes out of it.

I filed a complaint over theft of sheep once. All it got me was lost work days.

Nothing comes out of these complaints – and if it does, it is for the worse.

Neither the police nor the military take any action after complaints are filed. I have no trust in them.

I do not think there would be a fair investigation, or any investigation that would lead to anything.

I am not interested in filing a complaint because I worry that if I take action, soldiers would come and arrest me.

⁴⁶ For more on this reluctance and its effects see: Yesh Din, [Avoiding Complaining to Police – Facts and Figures](#) (August 2016).

⁴⁷ A total of twelve police complaints were filed. One crime victim, a Palestinian Authority employee, chose to file a complaint with the Palestinian Authority, which is expected to refer the complaint to the Israel Police.

I do not want to get in trouble with the military now, because I have never had trouble with them before and I do not want them to take away my ability to get a permit to enter Israel.

I am not interested in complaining to the police about the CSC. I have complained many times before and it did not help.

My father and my two brothers work in the settlement and they could lose their job. I have heard of cases in the past where people complained and their relatives lost their work permits.⁴⁸

The reasons cited by Palestinian crime victims for their lack of motivation to file a complaint with the Israel Police indicate this reluctance is influenced both by the demonstrated failure of the police to investigate settler violence against Palestinians and by structural reasons connected to the fact that the system charged with law enforcement against the settlers is part and parcel to the Israeli occupation apparatus in the West Bank.



An olive grove vandalized by settlers. Burin, June 2017 (Photo: Yesh Din)

48 Yesh Din cases, 4054/18; 3942/17; 3998/17; 4042/18; 4081/18; 4058/18; 4031/17; 3912/17; 3884/17; 3838/17.

CONCLUSION

"Here live enemies – expel or kill". This slogan was graffitied on the walls of a home in 'Urif in June 2018 by Israelis (see cover photo). The village is located near the settlement of Yitzhar. The hate graffiti was sprayed as Yesh Din was preparing this position paper and tragically sums up its main arguments.

Settler violence is another tool in Israel's takeover of Palestinian land in the West Bank. The state does not instigate settler violence, but the conduct of its agencies – the government, the military, the police and the prosecution – greenlights it.

This document focused on violence coming out of the settlement Yitzhar and its satellite outposts as well as the outpost of Giv'at Ronen and directed against residents of the Palestinian villages of Burin, Huwarah, Madama, 'Urif, Einabus and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah. The patterns described in this case study are not unique to the Yitzhar area. They are seen in different places and reflect reality in the entire West Bank.

Each year, Yesh Din documents more than one hundred cases of property damage or bodily harm caused to Palestinians by settlers and other Israelis. Settler violence is meant to produce fear and terror that push Palestinians out of their lands and pave the way for the expansion of Israeli control in the OPT. These motivations match Israel's ambition of taking over and ultimately annexing as much of the West Bank as possible.

As presented above, the protection Israel gives settlers fuels their continued violence toward Palestinians. The state gives settlers land and infrastructure, retroactively approves illegal construction, "regulates" unauthorized outposts and works to increase the legitimacy of Israeli presence in the West Bank. The military employs a "coordination mechanism" that hurts Palestinian farmers, fails to prevent attacks on village residents, and often helps the violent settlers whether directly, through soldiers' actions, or indirectly through the action of the CSCs. After the fact, if a complaint is filed, the police and the prosecution give the assailants de-facto immunity and rarely put anyone on trial.

Israel's conduct, which not only tolerates the violence perpetrated by settlers but, in fact, supports them, leads to the proliferation and expansion of violent actions. This violence is not incidental or banal. It is part of a system, another link in the chain of measures that work to take over Palestinian land. This Israeli policy severely violates the human rights of Palestinians, primarily the rights to life and security of person, rights to property and to freedom of movement. It cripples the daily lives of women, men and children, who are forced to confine themselves to ever shrinking spaces and live in constant fear, even inside their own homes.

Timeline: Israel takeover of Palestinian land

