© Friends of the Earth International.

Environmental Nakba

Environmental injustice and violations of the Israeli occupation of Palestine

A report of the Friends of the Earth International observer mission to the West Bank

Friends of the Earth International

The village of Om Elkheir.

Environmental Nakba

Environmental injustice and violations of the Israeli occupation of Palestine

A report of the Friends of the Earth International observer mission to the West Bank

September | 2013

Friends of the Earth International is an international federation of diverse grassroots-based environmental organizations with over 2 million members and supporters around the world. We challenge the current model of economic and corporate globalization, and promote solutions that will help to create environmentally sustainable and socially just societies.

Our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature. We envision a society of interdependent people living in dignity, wholeness and fulfilment in which equity and human and peoples' rights are realized.

This will be a society built upon peoples' sovereignty and participation. It will be founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice and free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalization, neo-colonialism and militarism.

We believe that our children's future will be better because of what we do.

Friends of the Earth has groups in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belgium (Flanders), Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Curaçao (Antilles), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, England/Wales/Northern Ireland, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada (West Indies), Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic of), Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tananzia, Timor Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, and Uruguay.
(Please contact the FoEI Secretariat or check www.foei.org for FoE groups' contact info)

Available for download at www.foei.org

Authors Abeer Al Butmah (PENGON, Friends of the Earth Palestine), Bobby Peek (groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa), Eurig Scandrett (Friends of the Earth Scotland).

Design our@onehemisphere.se, www.onehemisphere.se

This report is funded in part by the European Commission. The content of the report is the exclusive responsibility of the producers and does not reflect the position of the European Commission.

Friends of the Earth International

P.O. Box 19199
1000 GD Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: 31 20 622 1369
Fax: 31 20 639 2181
info@foei.org
www.foei.org

Contents

Foreword by Friends of the Earth International Chair Jagoda Munić 4

one Introduction: environmental injustice, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing 5

two Dispossession of resources: Land grabs and water apartheid 7

Om Elkheir and Kafr Dik 8

three Making sense of the present: the source of the water crisis 10

four Waste: Israel's Dirty business 11

Jayyous and Ariel 11

five Industry under the occupation: a licence to pollute 12

Gheshouri and Tulkarem 12

six Nature conservation: the green wash of ethnic cleansing 13

Wadi Qana 13

Conclusion 15

References 15

Environmental Nakba

Environmental injustice and violations of the Israeli occupation of Palestine

September | 2013

Foreword

Foreword

by Friends of the Earth International Chair Jagoda Munić

For decades, the international community has forced a twisted reality upon the Palestinian people. On one hand it has been paying lip service to the right of Palestinians to be freed from the yoke of Israeli occupation and determine their own destiny. On the other hand it has remained largely a silent witness to the onslaught of land grabbing, colonization and subjugation of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.

© foei

Round after round of international negotiators have cast a blind eye on the unabated construction of new Israeli settlements, military installations, roads and factories in the West Bank. Even more ignored has been the wholesale grabbing of fertile land and water resources and the environmental pollution and destruction due to industrial and nuclear waste dumping.

Seeking environmental justice is the hallmark of the 74 grassroots environmental groups that are united in Friends of the Earth International. For us environmental justice is intrinsically linked to social justice, human dignity, respect for human rights and the self-determination of peoples. And if there is one place in the world where the harm done to the environment is so evidently linked to social and political injustices suffered by a single people, it is Palestine.

That is why in 2012, Friends of the Earth International sent a mission to Palestine with a view to strengthen ties with our member group PENGON. We came to bear witness to incidents of environmental injustice and human rights violations, including the persecution of Palestinian environmental activists.

This report documents some of the environmental injustice that the mission observed. The information from our observers in Palestine has prompted Friends of the Earth International to develop a program of active solidarity with PENGON and the Palestinian people as they resist and mobilise against these injustices. With the publication of this report, we hope to help build global solidarity efforts that will continue to expose the social and environmental havoc wreaked by the Israeli occupation.

In solidarity,
Jagoda Munić, Croatia
Friends of the Earth International Chair

one Introduction

Introduction: environmental injustice, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing

In August 2012 a FoEI delegation participated in an observer mission in the West Bank in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to witness the environmental violations of the Israeli occupation. Since the mission, Palestine has been recognised as a state by a significant majority of countries and achieved observer status at the United Nations, although the Israeli occupation continues. Environmental problems in occupied Palestine are well documented, due to Palestinian research programmes such as the Applied Research Institute, the Land Research Centre and the Maan Development Centre - Palestinian Hydrology Group - all members of Friends of the Earth Palestine.

The observer mission witnessed numerous examples of expropriation of land and water resources and heard testimonies of officials, researchers, local people and environmental activists. We observed industrial sites with little or no controls on emissions, untreated sewage piped from urban developments onto open land and streams and waste hills from decades of uncontrolled dumping. We heard of the destruction of trees and the polluting of agricultural land and surface water. This report documents some of these observations, and provides some suggestions for collaborative projects in Palestine, either by further researches or solidarity support for the affected communities.

The nature of Palestine's environmental violations is not unique. Communities throughout the world are fighting land grabs and toxic dumps and our observations in the West Bank accord with the experiences of environmental injustice of oppressed peoples globally. What is distinctive about the Palestinian context is its historical location as a result of the military occupation by Israel since 1967, and the project of colonisation which has been occurring throughout the 20th century and continues into the 21st. It is because of this experience that the FoEI delegates used the phrase 'environmental Nakba'.

What Palestinians call the Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic) is the ethnic cleansing[1] which occurred in 1947-9, when 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes by Zionist militia and Israeli forces at the end of the British Mandate and during the establishment of the state of Israel (Pappe, 2006). Most of these refugees settled in camps in the West Bank and Gaza (then controlled by Jordan and Egypt respectively) and in neighbouring Arab countries. These refugees now form the bulk of the 11.5 million Palestinians, whose entitlement under the Geneva Convention on Refugees to return or to a just settlement has been denied by Israel.

Some writers have recently been arguing that the Nakba should be seen as an unfinished colonial project of Zionism, and that the occupation and colonization of historical Palestine by Israel since 1949 continues to be marked by practices of ethnic cleansing (Masalha, 2012).

1 The term 'ethnic cleansing' has gained widespread acceptance by since it was first used in the context of the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The United Nations Commission of Experts investigating war crimes there defined ethnic cleansing as "rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from the area." As used in this report, ethnic cleansing refers to practices that include actual expulsion but also the destruction and confiscation of homes, natural resources, infrastructure, cultural sites, symbols and places of worship.

one Introduction

continued

In these terms, Nakba refers not merely to an historical event but to an ongoing project of colonisation and ethnic cleansing that includes practices such as:

- *the demolition of emptied Palestinian villages in Israel and their replacement with forests by the Jewish National Fund;*
- *the renaming of geographical features and locations with new Hebrew names;*
- *the denial of full citizenship rights to the minority Palestinian population within Israel;*
- *the annexation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank and the progressive settlement with Israeli populations and demolition of Palestinian homes;*
- *the military occupation and colonisation of the West Bank since 1967;*
- *the segregation of the West Bank and settler plantation since the Oslo accords of 1993-7;*
- *the construction of the separation wall since 2002;*
- *the blockade of Gaza since 2007 and military attacks in 2009 and November 2012.*

It is in the context of this process of colonisation and ethnic cleansing that environmental destruction in Palestine may be understood.

Thus the construction of the apartheid wall may also be seen to constitute an environmental crime as it has destroyed hundred thousands of acres of Palestinian cultivated land and uprooted or destroyed thousands of trees, and eradicated wild plants and ecosystems, in addition to the expropriation of fertile surface soil, which was excavated and taken out of the occupied territories.

Young man flies the Palestinian flag on top of the separation wall at the beginning of a demonstration in 2009.

© Stop the Wall Campaign

two Dispossession of resources

Dispossession of resources:
Land grabs and water 'apartheid'

The historical land of Palestine that was occupied by Britain until the formation of the state of Israel has, since 1948, comprised Israel (78%), the West Bank (21%) and the Gaza strip (1%). As a result of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and a few other bordering land areas, and occupied the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights in Syria. The demarcation line between Israel and the occupied areas is known as the Green Line.

In the 1990s, the Oslo Interim accords divided the West Bank into three areas of control, giving a Palestinian Authority control over 17.7% (Area A) and partial administrative control of a further 18.3% (Area B). The remaining land (60.9% Area C and 3% nature reserve) is under Israeli military and administrative control, as is the entire border. It is in Area C that more than 200 Israeli settlements have been built, along with nearly 1000 km of connecting roads.

The separation wall, designed to segregate the West Bank from Israel, has largely been built on Palestinian land along the Western aquifer, which is the richest strategic groundwater basin. The barrier includes a strip of land called the 'seam zone' between the Green Line and the actual wall, effectively constituting a further land loss of around 8.5%. The confiscation of this land is being resisted by the Palestinian population located in enclaves in the seam zone, separated from the rest of the West Bank by the wall.

There are many mechanisms used by Israel to expropriate land in the West Bank, including Israeli laws, Jordanian laws, British Mandate laws and even Ottoman laws. Land can be arbitrarily designated as required for security purposes or as closed military areas. The expansion of areas that are off limits to Palestinians and the denial of their right to access vital land and water resources, reduce the land area, territorial contiguity and economic viability of a future Palestinian state, thus preempting its establishment and the realization of a two-state solution.

Instead, the situation in the West Bank raises the historical analogy of the apartheid regime of racial segregation in South Africa.

FIGURE 1 PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND

Source: *JVC.*

two Dispossession of resources

continued

Om Elkheir and Kafr Dik

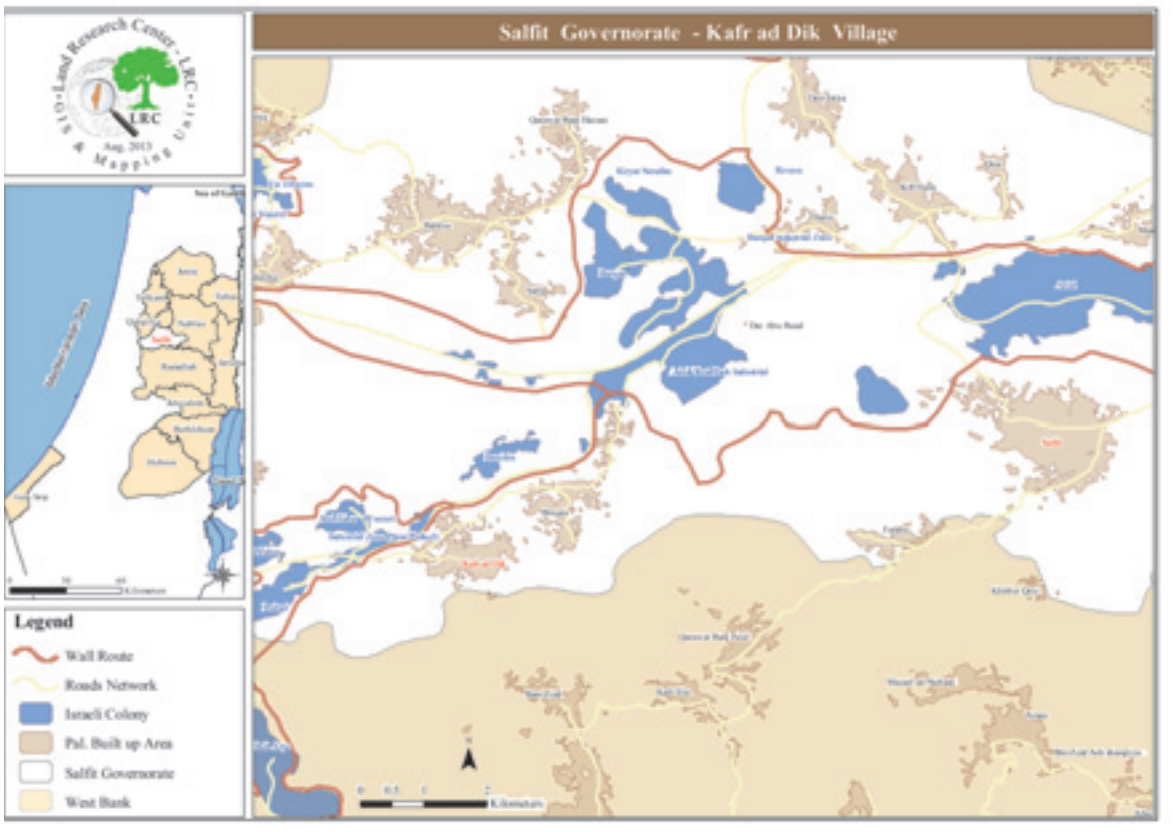
The observer mission visited two communities experiencing the appropriation of land and water by the Israeli occupying forces: the agricultural village of Kafr Dik, in the region of Salfit, and the Bedouin village of Om Elkheir in the South Hebron hills.

Kafr Dik is in many respects a typical Palestinian agricultural village of 5500 people, mostly in area C. One third of the income of the West Bank is from agriculture, compared with 6% in Jordan and 2% in Israel – although an increasing amount of the agricultural income in Israel is from Palestinian land illegally appropriated for agricultural settlements within the West Bank, including the New Agricultural Zone in the northern region of Jenin. Kafr Dik is in the central region of Salfit. The village has 13,000 dunams of land, of which 80 percent is under confiscation orders by the Israeli occupying authorities (1 dunam = 1000 m2). This land is required for expanding an Israeli industrial zone and three residential colonies namely Pedu'el, Ale Zahav and Rochim, from which Palestinians are excluded.

Land is confiscated using a law from the Ottoman period that permits the state to expropriate land which is not in use – evidence for which is ensured by military exclusion, vandalism and intimidation by settlers, and fabrication. Twenty five outbuildings in olive orchards have been destroyed, and also a number of water cisterns, some of which date back to the Roman era 2000 years ago. Access roads are regularly closed to exclude tractors. Whilst Israeli settlements continually expand, Palestinians are prevented from carrying out any development with the result that any building or renovation work is regarded as illegal by the occupiers. Many inhabited Palestinian houses are therefore under demolition orders from the Israeli military.

The mayor and the municipality try to challenge the legal basis for the confiscations, supported by NGOs, academics and human rights lawyers. The municipality also provides water and electricity services to houses expanding in the confiscated land to enable them to develop in defiance of Israeli orders and demolition threats.

FIGURE 2 KAFR DIK



Source: *Land Research Center.*

The village has one natural spring where people are fetching their water either by trucks or by animals. They were denied access to the water supply network by Israeli Military occupation for decades. However as a result of lobbying, the village recently obtained access to the water network controlled by the Israeli state water company Mekarot, and 28 cubic metres per day is provided to Kafr Dik and its neighbouring village of a similar size. The Kafr Dik access valve is close to the industrial settlement and the water is often contaminated. Rationing, by closing valves in rotation, ensures that the water is distributed amongst households. The remaining shortfall in water is obtained by seasonal rain collection in cisterns, and buying expensive water from tankers.

Kafr Dik is close to the Green Line, the internationally recognised border which separates Israel from the West Bank. The village is part of the central east-west corridor of settlements and connecting roads which bisects the West Bank. This corridor has seen significant land confiscation and settlement building activity which is likely to result in a continuous settlement belt, separating the North of the West Bank from the South, and rendering a united Palestinian state in the West Bank unfeasible.

In November 2012, three months after the observer mission, Israel announced that it would commence with developing the controversial E1 settlement block, which would join the large settlement of Ma'ale Adumin to annexed East Jerusalem, effectively confiscating hundreds of dunams of Palestinian land for the benefit of Israeli Settlers.

The FoEI delegates also visited Om Elkheir, a Bedouin village in the South Hebron hills, which is engaged in a struggle for access to water. We heard from the village Sheikh and representatives from political bodies and NGOs, and took part in a symbolic demonstration of defiance. The community of Om Elkheir purchased land for this village after they were evicted from their tribal lands in the Negev, which became part of Israel in 1948. The 150 households from 23 families today are entirely dependent on their livestock, and have no connection to water networks or electricity.

Since the occupation, the colonial settlement of Karma'el has grown and surrounded Om Elkheir with residential blocks and poultry factory-farms. Israel provides Karma'el with access to the water supply network whilst the Palestinian Water Authority is prevented from providing network access for Om Elkheir and prohibits the construction of cisterns. As a result, settlers have access to 89 percent of the water, and use 300 litres per person per day, compared to the Palestinians' 15 litres, which is transported by donkeys and carried on women's and children's heads from long distances. The water pipes which conduct the settlers' water pass through Om Elkheir's land.

The village of Om Elkheir. © Eid Suleiman Hadaleen

three Making sense of the present

Making sense of the present: the source of the water crisis

Water available to the West Bank comes mostly from three aquifers: the Eastern, Western & North Eastern, the abstraction from which Israel has total control. As a result, less than 15% is abstracted for Palestinian use and more than 85% for Israelis. For the largest, Western Aquifer, Israel abstracts at a rate higher than annual recharge. Within the West Bank, Palestinians access three quarters of their water from wells, springs and rainwater harvesting and need to purchase the remainder from the Israeli state water company Mekarot. Because of Israeli development restrictions there has been no new wells or increased abstraction capacity in the West Bank since the occupation in 1967 - indeed Palestinian abstraction decreased by 18% between 1999 and 2007. As a result, Palestinian average water consumption in the West Bank is 73 litres per person per day, significantly less than the World Health Organization's recommended minimum use of 100 litres per day and compared with 300 in Israel and 369 in the colonial settlements. Even this average Palestinian consumption level conceals large variations across the West Bank (Isaacs & Hilal, 2011).

Access to surface water from the Jordan River has been prohibited to Palestinians by the Israeli occupying forces since 1967 and the land adjacent to the river declared a closed military zone. Despite a series of international agreements aimed at equitable distribution and sustainable use of the Jordan river (with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as Palestine), water is currently extracted almost entirely by Israel at a rate that has reduced its flow to less than 4% of that during the Mandate time, much of it transported to the Negev desert to 'make it bloom'.

Along a significant proportion of its route, the land expropriated for the segregation wall follows the area of economically viable extraction from the large western aquifer and represents, according to some estimates, up to 15 million cubic metres of water abstraction. This is of negligible direct value to Israel but to the Palestinians represents a potential loss of 75% of water available from this aquifer (Koppelman & Alshalalfeh, 2012).

The UN office of humanitarian affairs recently raised serious concerns about what it called a 'war on springs': the direct expropriation of water sources by settlers, through simple theft, fencing off wells, and intimidation, threats and physical violence, all tolerated or encouraged by the occupying military forces (UNOCHA 2012).

The expropriation of water sources, along with land confiscation, has been a significant source of grassroots resistance amongst Palestinians, with regular nonviolent protests coordinated by popular resistance committees. These protests are frequently met with violent repression and collective punishment by the occupying force, including 'administrative detention' (imprisonment without charge) of adults and children alike.

four Waste

Waste:
Israel's Dirty business

Jayyous and Ariel

Waste is another political tool used by the Israeli occupiers. The settlement of Ariel dumps liquid waste – sewage and industrial – onto Palestinian water-courses and agricultural land, rendering it contaminated and unworkable and therefore easier to confiscate under the 'unused land' rule. The FoEI delegates observed the wastewater outflow pipes from Ariel and other, smaller settlements, and the resultant contaminated land.

Less than half a million colonial settlers produce more than half of the wastewater in the West Bank. The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem has estimated that wastewater from nearly a third of all West Bank settlements flows untreated onto Palestinian land, and those settlements with wastewater treatment systems are often inadequate and poorly maintained. Ariel's treatment plant ceased functioning in 2008 and the settlement's wastewater has flowed into the Al Matwi stream and Salfit land since then.

Israeli restrictions imposed on Palestinian development include the precondition which prohibits any Palestinian Community from developing their own wastewater treatment system without treating the wastewater of the nearby Israeli colonies. Therefore, treatment of wastewater from Palestinian communities in the West Bank is inadequate, with only one treatment plant in Al Berieh continuing to function. It is estimated that more than 90% of wastewater from Palestinian homes is untreated and either collected in cesspits or discharged onto wadis.

Collection and treatment of solid waste in the West Bank suffers the same problem of Israeli constraints on infrastructure development. The observers witnessed considerable numbers of informal waste dump sites, including several where waste was in the process of being burned. Even those official waste dumping sites are poorly regulated and accept waste from both Palestinian communities and colonial settlements: 80% of waste from settlements is dumped within the West Bank (Isaacs and Hilal, 2011)

In Qalqilia the FoEI observers saw the great mound of solid waste from 20 years of unregulated dumping of Israeli industrial and chemical waste. The observers heard how the toxins from this waste are leaching into the water used by nearby Jayyous and Azzun, with the resultant risk to the health of their inhabitants.

The waste site was first established in 1980 on land confiscated from a Jayyous resident. Since 1989 however, large quantities of industrial waste started to be dumped on the site. Complaints filed by local communities and, since its inception, the Palestinian Authority, led to the cessation of dumping in 2000. Since then tests have revealed water contamination with lead and "revealed the presence of 17 poisonous chemicals, some of which are internationally forbidden" (ARIJ/LRC 2009). Levels of cancer and gynaecological irregularities are reportedly exceptionally high in the local villages of Jayyous and Azzun.

There is also documentation of hazardous waste being smuggled into the West Bank from Israel for illegal dumping, and the occupying military forces dumping highly toxic and nuclear waste in the occupied territories (Isaac and Hilal, 2011).

Dumping site near Qalquilia.

five Industry under the occupation

Industry under the occupation: a licence to pollute

Geshouri and Tulkarem

FoEI delegates observed the Nitzanei Shalom industrial estate on the edge of Tulkarem, in northern West Bank, containing eleven chemical factories owned by Israeli companies but built in the aforementioned seam zone on confiscated Palestinian land behind the separation wall. In this zone there are no controls, no monitoring and no Palestinian authority can implement restrictions. The Israeli military controls who enters and leaves the factory, which guarantees low wages, poor health & safety conditions and environmental impacts. The factories in the industrial estate employ around 500 Palestinian workers, many of whom earn below the minimum wage and work long hours in poor conditions.

The industrial site, which claimed in the media to be a model of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, was first established in 1984 when the Gishuri plant, which produces chemical herbicides fertilizers and chemical assets, relocated from within Israel, where it was subject to legal action for pollution. Within the seam zone, it can pollute with impunity and has attracted other factories to the site. Industrial settlements in the West Bank operate under ambiguous legal frameworks controlled by the occupying Israeli military, a situation which factory owners take full advantage of. Even the Israeli State Comptroller described these conditions as "bordering on lawlessness" which "place the well-being, health and lives of the workers in the industrial zones in real danger" (AIC, 2011).

According to Corporate Watch, eleven companies are located in the Nitzanei Shalom industrial estate, including four with international reach: Gishuri (agricultural and industrial chemistry), Solor (fuel tanks), Yamit (water treatment devices) and Hatehof, which manufactures military hardware.

The FoEI delegates were not able to speak to any of the workers or a representative from the workers' association, but when Corporate Watch interviewed workers in 2010 they were told that Palestinian trades union officials were prevented from entering the site. Deductions from the workers' wages are paid to Histradrut, the Israeli organisation of labour unions which refuses to support Palestinians working in the Nitzanei Shalom industrial estate, and workers involved in actions to improve wages and conditions are victimised.

Chemical plants near Tulkarem.

six Nature conservation

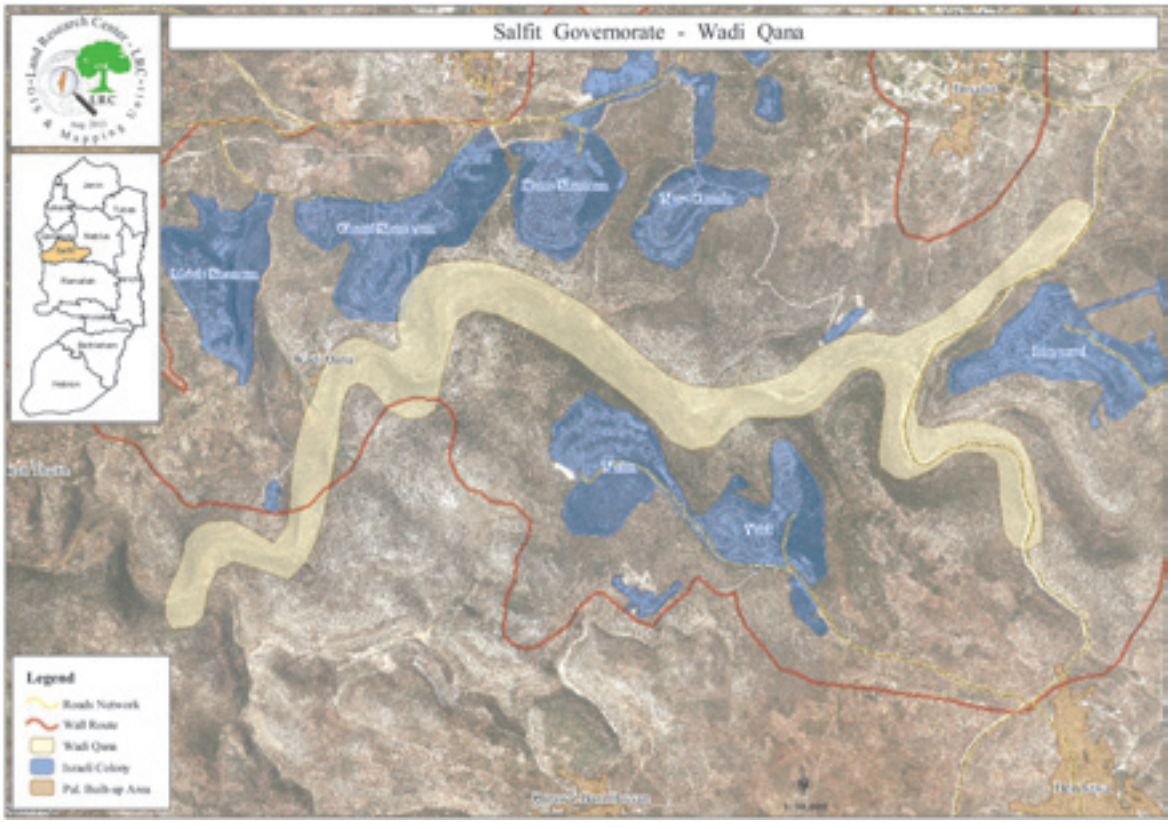
Nature conservation:
the green wash of ethnic cleansing

Wadi Qana

The land of Palestine which constituted the British Mandate lies on the confluence of three major vegetation sectors – Mediterranean, semi-desert and extreme desert - and is therefore of international importance. Because of this ecologically complexity, the West Bank is unusually rich in species diversity, with some 1600 vascular plant species (IUCN), with the highest diversity being in the semi-desert belt. There are 298 vascular plant species on the preliminary red list of Palestine, some of which are globally threatened.

The FoEI observers visited Wadi Qana, an area of 10,000 dunams in the Salfit region between 500–775m elevations on the mountainous ridge of Palestine. The Wadi has mean annual rainfall of 676mm and eleven natural springs throughout its length, which means that, unusually for Palestine, there is running water throughout the year if not over-extracted. It has a Mediterranean climate with maquis vegetation dominant, some wetland ecosystems and areas of productive olive groves. The area is regarded as an Important Plant Area by the IUCN and "is a reservoir of medicinal plants for Salfit and Nablus cities and contains many species protected by law such as *Ophrys* species and *Tulipa agenesis*." (Al-Sheikh / IUCN 2010)

FIGURE 3 WADI QANA



Source: *Land Research Center.*

Wadi Qana is an important example of the social-ecological integration of agricultural production with natural biological diversity, at least it was until the pressures of the Israeli occupation disrupted this. The land is owned by the village of Dier Istiya who use the area for grazing and citrus and olive orchards. At its peak production, Wadi Qana's olive trees produced more than 30,000 tonnes of olive oil. It is also a place of recreation for Palestinian families from Dier Istiya and further afield, popular for picnics.

In 1979, Wadi Qana was declared a military zone by the Israeli Occupying force, which prevented Palestinian access to the area. Following a concerted campaign, the military designation was lifted in 1982 and the area declared a nature reserve by Israel. The people of Dier Istiya had access to their land again, although were forbidden to cultivate it. During the three years of military designation, nine Israeli settlements had been established around the perimeter of the Wadi. These settlements extracted water from the springs and emptied raw sewage into the Wadi.

Local pressure forced the construction of pipes in 2005 to transport sewage for treatment and recycling at the Nir Eliahu regional treatment plant inside Israel, (B'tselem, 2009). Even now, sewage management is inefficient and overflows and leakages of raw sewage onto Palestinian agricultural land are common; indeed there are recent recorded incidents of deliberate pumping of raw sewage into agricultural land in the Wadi (LRC Nov 20 2011). Wells have been constructed to extract water from the Wadi and water levels are falling. Palestinians who made use of the Wadi have been subject to escalating harassment by the Israeli state occupying forces and the settlers.

Under the guise of nature protection, areas of Wadi Qana have been requisitioned by the Israeli state and Palestinian property destroyed. Olive trees have been bulldozed, seedlings uprooted, outbuildings demolished and Palestinian Authority agricultural development projects ransacked. The road linking the settlement of Karni Shamron to the main road is in the process of being expanded, cutting Dier Istiya residents off from their land. In addition, there have been regular cases of settlers vandalising trees, walls, outbuildings, agricultural machinery, irrigation channels and sewage pipes; writing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim graffiti and even issuing death threats to a local farmer. There are reports of violations by Israeli occupation forces or settlers every few weeks. At the time of the FoEI visit, 1700 trees had been uprooted the previous year and a demolition order on a further 1400 being challenged in the Israeli High court. Settlers, however, are permitted to cultivate land and destroy native trees and shrubs in the 'nature reserve'.

In addition, the Wadi has been used to dump solid waste and poisonous industrial chemical waste liquids from industrial zones of Ariel and Barkan settlements.

The designation of green space has become a significant tool of ethnic cleansing for the Israeli occupying forces. According to the Palestinian Land Research Centre, 3% of the land of the West Bank is designated nature reserve. However, 12% of the West Bank has been declared by Israel as a nature reserve (Isaac and Hilal, 2011). This discrepancy is legitimised by the development of a tourist industry associated with the settlements, converting areas of natural beauty in Palestine into playgrounds for Israelis from which Palestinians are excluded. This process is supported and funded by several Israeli state and para-state organisations such as the Jewish National Fund (UNOCHA, 2012).

Conclusion and References

Conclusion

Israeli settlements, roads, military installations, the separation wall, and zones which are off limits to Palestinians are among the most visible landmarks of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. However, as the examples in this report show, the occupation also comprises of a whole host of less visible practices of colonization.

These practices include toxic waste-dumping, which affects the fresh water supply of Palestinian communities; the expropriation and diversion of fresh water sources from Palestinian communities to the benefit of Israeli settlers, irrigation and potable water supply in Israel; the development of polluting industry in the seam zones, which affects the Palestinian workers and the air quality in neighbouring areas; and the destruction of land cultivated by Palestinians, under the guise of nature conservation.

Such practices may be seen to constitute not merely environmental crimes but also acts that are part and parcel of systematic colonization and ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories. In these terms, the concept of 'environmental Nakba' puts environmental injustices rightly in the context of the wider social injustices and human rights violations suffered by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, and their internationally recognized right to self-determination.

For these reasons, Friends of the Earth International's solidarity with the Palestinian people does not merely pertain to their struggle against environmental injustices but extends as well to their struggle against the occupation and for their right to self-determination.

References

Alternative Information Center (AIC), 2011, 'State Comptroller Report: Industrial Zones in Judea and Samaria and the Rural Sector' http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/features/economy-of-the-occupation/4481-west-bank-industrial-zones-endanger-lives-break-laws.html

Al-Sheikh, B., 2010. IUCN Country Report 'Important Plant Areas in Palestine'

B'Tselem, 2009 'Foul Play: Neglect of Wastewater Treatment in the West Bank'

Korzom, May (2009), 'Walls of Racism: the colonial motives for environmental destruction in Palestine' http://www.maan-ctr.org/magazine/Archive/Issue14/index.htm

Isaac, Jad& Hilal, Jane (2011): 'Palestinian landscape and the Israeli - Palestinian conflict', International Journal of Environmental Studies, 68:4, 413-429

Koppelman and Alshalalfeh 2012 'The Human right to Water in Palestine', Lifesource http://www.blueplanetproject.net/documents/RTW/RTW-Palestine-1.pdf

Land Resource Center (LRC) 2006 'Wadi Qana polluted by Israeli settlements' http://www.poica.org/editor/case_studies/view.php?recordID=923

Masalha, Nur 2012, The Palestine Nakba, Zed books

Pappe, Ilan 2006, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Oneworld Publications

UNCHA 2012 'How Dispossession Happens: The Humanitarian Impact of the Takeover of Palestinian Water Springs by Israeli Settlers.', Special Focus, March 2012

www.foei.org

Friends of
the Earth
International