



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان  
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**Joint Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Food on the Impact of Israeli Colonial and Discriminatory Policies and Practices on Palestinian Food Security in the West Bank**

**2 July 2024**

1. This submission is prepared in response to a call for inputs issued by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr. Michael Fakhri, for his upcoming report on human rights and starvation, with an emphasis on the Palestinian people's food sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> **This submission, to be read in conjunction with our two other joint submissions, addresses a number of Israeli policies and practices to hinder Palestinian food security in the West Bank.**
2. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including farmers and livestock breeders, face expropriation of their land; forced displacement; denial of the right to water; denial of freedom of movement; attacks by Israeli occupying forces and settlers, including damage to or destruction of agricultural fields and crops, uprooting of trees and damage to or killing of livestock; enduring environmental damage, including air and sewage pollution from colonial settlements; and magnified impacts of climate change due to Israel's discriminatory policies and practices.<sup>2</sup>
3. Israel's displacement and dispossession of residents of the West Bank is demonstrated by its practice of systematically targeting the resources necessary to maintain Palestinian livelihood. Exploitation of, and control over, natural resources has been central to build, sustain and develop Israel's illegal settlement enterprise. These resources include those that are relevant to food security, namely land and water. The targeting of natural resources includes Israel's obstruction of the development of the water and agricultural sectors, livestock production included. Concurrently, environmental damage, including from air and sewage pollution or waste dumpsters from colonial settlements and aerial spraying of herbicides, threatens agricultural land, degrades crops and livestock, and jeopardises Palestinian health. This environmental degradation not only harms immediate food production but also compromises the long-term sustainability and resilience of Palestinians.<sup>3</sup>
4. As of 2022, Israel has declared approximately 20% of the West Bank as closed military zones, a two percent increase over the last 10 years.<sup>4</sup> Over half of Area C in the West Bank (1.765 million dunams) is designated as such, and used to facilitate the establishment and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, including on private Palestinian land. Notably, quasi-governmental entities, such as the Jewish National Fund and the World Zionist Organization, have continually played a role in expropriating Palestinian land and managing its allocation to colonial settlements.
5. Palestinians are not only barred from accessing their land in military zones, but their water structures, including wells, are also frequently confiscated within these areas.

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<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, "Call for input - Human Rights and Starvation, with an emphasis on the Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty", available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-input-human-rights-and-starvation-emphasis-palestinian-peoples-food>.

<sup>2</sup> Suha Jarrar, *Adaptation Under Occupation: Climate Change Vulnerability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Al-Haq, 2019), available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/publications/15261.html>.

<sup>3</sup> For visual documentation of environmental harm against Palestinians, including farmers, in the West Bank, see Annexes 1, 2, and 3, captured by Al-Haq's field researchers through eyeWitness. This visual documentation is merely a reflection of the data documented and further information can be provided upon request.

<sup>4</sup> While not addressed in this submission, it is crucial to note that The Israeli authorities have also instituted aggressive planning and zoning policies targeting Palestinians within the Green Line, particularly in the Naqab, which deprive the indigenous Palestinian people of their rights to freedom of movement and residence, adequate housing, and access to and control over their land and other natural resources. These policies have dramatically reduced the amount of land available for Palestinian use due to unlawful appropriation and designation of lands as closed military zones.

Notably, the Mountain Aquifer, one of the three main water resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, is the only region where the natural groundwater flow does not carry underground water beyond the Green Line. Thus, Israeli companies, such as Mekorot, extract this groundwater for illegal settlements. These water rich areas have been incorporated into Israeli firing zones and military areas, facilitating unimpeded drilling while denying Palestinian access and permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.

6. Between 1 January 2022 and 31 May 2024, Al-Haq documented the destruction of 610 agricultural and livestock structures, including water wells, agricultural rooms, and livestock pens, by Israeli occupying authorities, forces and settlers, throughout the West Bank.<sup>5</sup>
7. Moreover, Palestinians are further subjected to having their lands razed and trees uprooted by the Israeli occupying authorities.<sup>6</sup> **Omar Issa** purchased land on Area C in 2017 and planted grape vines and olives trees in 2018. In 2019, he received an eviction notice from the occupying authorities, which he contested. The Israeli military court rejected his objection, and the case went to the High Court. Despite not receiving a response, Israeli occupying authorities razed his land on 10 January 2024. Omar told Al-Haq, the land “became like a paradise, and I was happy with its produce... These trees had become fruitful, and for almost two years, I had been able to harvest their produce... The scene after they left was heart-breaking. I felt as if I might lose my life from the intensity of my sorrow. The land became empty again, as if it had never been cultivated before.”<sup>7</sup>
8. Concurrently, Israeli settlers have been increasing their attacks against Palestinians, often with the protection of the Israeli occupying forces, including by ongoing colonisation attempts; physically attacking Palestinians including by killing and injuring them and attacking them in their homes and properties; attacking Palestinian properties, including livestock and agricultural lands; obstructing their movement; and various acts of intimidations and provocations.<sup>8</sup> In one documented instance, on 9 October 2023, while **Subhi Shalaldeh**, a Palestinian shepherd, was grazing sheep with his brother, was approached by 40 armed settlers. Subhi and his brother quickly secured the sheep in a pen, but the settlers threatened them, stole 200 sheep belonging to the family and warned that they would kill them if they did not leave. Subhi, along with his father and brother, stayed while the rest of the family fled. Fifteen minutes later, 20 settlers returned and set fire to their homes, livestock pens, and three solar cells. Subhi told Al-Haq, “We lost our homes and our source of livelihood in moments, saving only

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<sup>5</sup> For visual documentation of destruction of agricultural and livestock structures in the West Bank, see Annexes 4, 5, and 6, captured by Al-Haq’s field researchers through eyeWitness. This visual documentation is merely a reflection of the data documented and further information can be provided upon request.

<sup>6</sup> For visual documentation of Israeli razing of agricultural lands in the West Bank, see Annexes 7 and 8 captured by Al-Haq’s field researchers through eyeWitness. This visual documentation is merely a reflection of the data documented and further information can be provided upon request.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-01-016-BL-F-A1-IL-NTG, taken from Omar Ismaeel Mohammad Issa, 51, a resident of Bethlehem Governorate, on 15 January 2024.

<sup>8</sup> For visual documentation of destruction and damage caused by settler violence against Palestinian farmers, shepherds and livestock breeders in the West Bank, see Annex 9, captured by Al-Haq’s field researchers through eyeWitness. This visual documentation is merely a reflection of the data documented and further information can be provided upon request.

ourselves. We couldn't resist them, especially since they were armed, and I don't believe they would have hesitated to kill any of us".<sup>9</sup>

9. In light of the above, we urge the Special Rapporteur to:
- Demand Israel to immediately cease the unlawful appropriation and exploitation of Palestinian land and natural resources;
  - Address the role of Israel's parastatal institutions, including Jewish National Fund and the World Zionist Organization, in Israel's settler-colonialism and apartheid regime and appropriation of Palestinian land, and thereby, Palestinian food insecurity;
  - Recognise Israel's judicial system as part and parcel of Israel's apartheid regime; and
  - Call on Third States to take immediate actions and measures, in line with their obligations *erga omnes*, against Israel's colonial settlement enterprise, including by instituting a ban on settlement imports, supporting and endorsing available mechanisms to counter the expansion of Israel's unlawful settlement enterprise, including the UN Database of all business enterprises involved in or with settlements.

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<sup>9</sup> Al-Haq Affidavit 2024-02-009-HE-F-A1-IL-SET, taken from Subhi Mohammad AbdulFattah Shalaldeh, 35, a resident of Hebron Governorate, on 6 February 2024.

## Annexes

- eyeWitness to Atrocities' technology was designed to ensure that footage of mass atrocity crimes meets evidentiary admissibility standards applicable before most courts worldwide. The technology is based on two pillars: i) the eyeWitness to Atrocities' App (the "App") and ii) the eyeWitness to Atrocities' Server (the "Server").
- The App is a software designed by eyeWitness to Atrocities for Android smart phones. The App enables users to capture photographs, videos, and audios (together, the "footage"), and uses the device sensors to record metadata that help to authenticate their footage. Specifically, the App captures data to identify the date, time, and location of the footage. The design of the App also ensures that neither the footage nor its associated metadata can be tampered with by the users or third parties.
- The Server is a secure repository system set up by eyeWitness to Atrocities. The Server is hosted and protected by LexisNexis Legal & Professional, a part of the RELX Group. In conjunction with the transmission protocols, the Server creates a chain of custody with embedded information for the footage from the point of capture to its receipt by the Server.

### ***Annex 1: Sewage waste released by Israeli settlers towards Palestinian land in Deir Ballout, Salfit, captured on 21 February 2024***



*Annex 2: Sewage waste released by Israeli settlers towards Jalboun village, eastern Jenin, captured on 16 January 2020*



*Annex 3: A garbage dump near Palestinian farms and agricultural lands in the Al-Jubiya area in the Jordan Valley, captured on 1 May 2019*





*Annex 4: Destruction and closure of an artesian well under the pretext that the owners lack a building permit, in Ras Atiya village, south of Qalqilya, captured on 27 January 2024*



*Annex 5: Destruction of an agricultural room by the Israeli authorities in al-Hamamees area, east of Qalqilya, captured on 2 February 2021*





*Annex 6: The destruction of a water well in Um al Kheir village, Yatta town in Hebron Governorate on 22 May 2023, captured on 25 May 2023*



*Annex 7: Uprooted olive tree by Israeli occupying forces in Ainun area, east of Tubas, captured on 27 January 2021*





***Annex 8: The uprooting and confiscation of olive trees in Bardala village in the Jordan Valley by the Israeli occupying authorities, captured on 5 February 2019***



***Annex 9: The burning of olive trees by settlers of the Yitzhar settlement on Jabal Suleiman Al-Farsi, south of Bourin village, south of Nablus, captured on 15 September 2021***

