

Monthly report on Israeli violations in Abu Dis, March 2008

The Israeli violations on the people in Abu Dis continued during March. During this month in Abu Dis there were several invasions of houses and the Israeli army arrested a number of young people. There were protests and demonstrations in Abu Dis in solidarity with the people of Gaza against the Israeli aggression and the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. In particular on "Black Saturday" (1st March) 68 people were killed in the Gaza Strip as a result of Israeli shelling, most of them civilians.

Also during March 08. the Israeli military changed the way the Israeli army controlled the area of Abu Dis; they replaced the Border Police in this area with the military as in the rest of the West Bank.

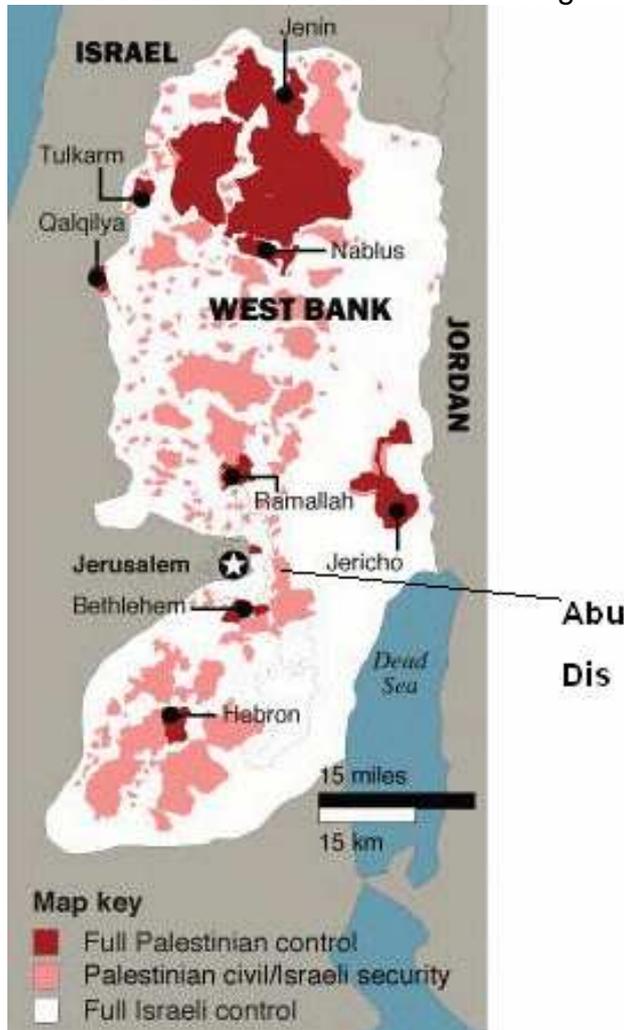


Building the Wall & confiscating land

- The Israeli plan to build 800 settlement housing units on the land of Abu Dis:

The Israeli minister Eli Yeshai announced further building under the plan, in particular the in particular the beginning of building the new settlement "Kidmat Zion" on the land of Khalit Abed, West of Abu Dis. This was during the visit to it with the leaders of the extreme Zionist organisation Ateret Kohenim to the west part of the lands of Abu Dis which was taken over after the building of the Separation Wall on the west of the town.

Note that the people of the area of Khalit Abed were told to leave the area by the Israeli authorities more than a year before. Now there are more than fifty people living in the neighbourhood, all of them members of one extended family, and living in really bad circumstances. Those of them carrying West Bank IDs are not allowed to leave the area without having their names recorded at the gate that was constructed on the street leading to their area, and no one is allowed to enter without giving their names in at the gate.



Maps adapted from Gush Shalom

This map shows the limited area of Palestinian control in the West Bank. In fact, Gush Shalom is optimistic in labelling any of the areas "full Palestinian control" – these red areas actually refer to Area A where the Palestinian police operate, but the Israeli army demonstrates its control by coming in regularly, whenever they want to.

The Ayyad family, the legal owners of the Cliff Hotel in the town of Abu Dis sent a letter to Tony Blair, as Delegate of the Quartet, via the British Consulate in Jerusalem, asking him to rescue their hotel which was taken away from them by the Israeli authorities nearly five years ago. The hotel is located on the lands of the West Bank that was occupied in 1967 and at that date was annexed by the Israeli authorities that controlled the area called by the Israelis "Judea and Samaria." The hotel was dealt with like other places in the West Bank under Israeli military procedures and not as part of the civilian area of Jerusalem. So the owners of the hotel tell of their amazement at the reply of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior to a question that was posed by the British Ambassador to Israel, saying that the landlords of the hotel had "disappeared."



There is more information about the settlements around Jerusalem in a useful UN report "The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank" (July 2007)
http://www.ochaopt.org/?module=displaysection§ion_id=1&format=html



This map shows main fixed checkpoints – There are often temporary “flying” checkpoints

Israeli violations at the checkpoints round Abu Dis

Since the Israelis started to build the Separation Wall around Jerusalem they have worked to seal off Jerusalem very thoroughly from its suburb, and they have made special "terminals"¹ for people to go through to get into the city. For the towns on the east of Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities built a terminal in a place between the Mount of Olives and the town of Aizariyeh to allow people carrying West Bank passes and who have also got a permit, following very long and complicated procedures, specially now they use finger prints as well as permits. And at al-Zayem on the Jerusalem road leading to the settlement of Maale Adumim, they have put a checkpoint that can only be used by people with Jerusalem passes. In this part of the report we will record the Israeli violations at the checkpoints in the Wall in the area round East Jerusalem.

Since the first intifada, the area of Abu Dis has been treated by Israel in some ways similarly to East Jerusalem, and it has been controlled by the Israeli Border Police. Some local people used to think that the area might be linked with Jerusalem and even hoped so; but during March 08 Israel replaced the Border Police in this area with the military as in the rest of the West Bank.

- .On Thursday 6th March, the Israeli authorities imposed a complete closure on many Palestinian towns and villages and stopped the

¹ The Palestinians are now using the word “mua’bar” (translated into “terminal”) to describe the huge checkpoints, like international frontiers, that are the ways through the Wall.

people from the East Jerusalem towns from going to other places in the East Bank. This prevented even people who had passes to go there from going into Jerusalem. This closure stayed for a week before it was lifted.

- On Monday the 24th March, the Israeli authorities imposed a complete closure on Palestinian places and prevented people from going to or from their towns and villages and again stopped people with passes from going into Jerusalem.
- The Israeli authorities refuse more than three quarters of applicants for permits to enter the town of Jerusalem – they say this is for security reasons, but the Palestinians see it as a collective punishment imposed on the people. This is also the case for people who are ill and other humanitarian cases - they stop many people entering Jerusalem even for treatment in the hospitals. In many cases, people have found themselves obliged to travel for medical treatment abroad.
- For more than three years, Abdullah Lafee Khalaf, 56 years old, has been suffering from heart disease and he has again and again presented himself to the Israeli authorities of Jerusalem in order to get a permit to go to Jerusalem for his treatment at the al-Muqassed Health Hospital, but he is regularly refused permission and told that this is for security reasons. On Thursday 13th March, his doctors told him that it was urgent that he should have a heart operation, so he paid to travel to Jordan in order to have the operation. It should be noted that the al-Muqassed Hospital is about three kilometres from the town of Abu Dis but Abdullah Lafee was obliged to travel to another country to save his health.

Israeli pass laws and the issue of Jerusalem citizenship

Successive Israeli governments have worked to implement a recommendation made in 1973 by the Israeli Ministerial Committee for Jerusalem under the leadership of Golda Meir, to reduce the percentage of Palestinians in Jerusalem to under 22%. This has led to many different policies that have distorted the demography of Jerusalem. The most recent of these policies has been to put great pressure on Palestinians of Jerusalem, and led to many thousands of people having their Jerusalem IDs taken from them. Although five thousand families in Jerusalem have lost their IDs since 1973, the Palestinians still represent 35% of the population of Jerusalem city itself, because many Jerusalemites who had moved into the suburbs have moved back to live inside the city since the Wall was built. During just the year 2006, 1,363 Jerusalem residents lost their Jerusalem IDs (figures - Israeli Interior Ministry) This came after Israel had separated Jerusalem completely from its suburbs. Many people who have Jerusalem IDs, and many families who have mixed IDs live in these suburbs. Note that most people in Abu Dis have West Bank IDs but a minority have Jerusalem IDs.

Arresting and invading houses

During this month the Israeli authorities continued the policy of invading houses and arresting people. Israeli soldiers together with the intelligence

forces invaded houses during the night, searched and damaged things, and made several arrests during the last month. The Public Committee against Torture in Israel has noted an increase in the past year in the number of cases of pressure on prisoners through putting pressure on family members . In Abu Dis this month and last month family members of prisoners have been arrested, possibly for the same reason.²

- On Saturday the 1st March, a force of Israeli soldiers together with an Israeli intelligence officer burst into the house of Hassan Thawabteh and arrested his son Mohammed who is 20 years old. They took him to the Maale Adumim police station and then to Awfar prison to wait for a court date, after the occupation court presented him with a charge. Note that Mohammed is the younger brother of Rawan Thawabteh³ who spent 4 years in Israeli prisons.
- On Sunday 2nd March, a group of Israeli soldiers beat up a young man, Yasser Yousef Rabiya, after stopping him at the crossroads leading to the Israeli military camp in Abu Dis. Eye witnesses said that the soldiers had shot rubber bullets at Yasser who was hit by eight bullets in different parts of his body. After that, three soldiers subjected him to a severe beating although people passing by tried to prevent this. Yasser was arrested. His family say that he spent three days in Israeli hospital because of the severe beating that he had had, and that he was then set free but still suffering from bruises and fractures and in need of treatment. Yasser's son Amar, a student in Abu Dis Boys' School has been inside Israeli prison for more than a year and a half.
- On Tuesday 4th March, an Israeli force burst into the houses of Mohammed Yasser Mohsen and Moatassem Hassan Badr and Mohammed Al Nawafleh and arrested them. The prisoners' families said that the Israeli soldiers had burst into their houses late in the night and behaved aggressively to their children. Then they took them to the Maale Adumim Police Station. They released the young people after holding them for three days.
- On Monday 10th March a force of Israeli soldiers entered the houses of Ramzi Adil Salah and Malk Radi Qreya and arrested both of them and then took them to Maale Adumim police station for investigation – and then released them after three days.
- On Sunday 16th March, the family of Ahmed Eid Abu Hilal were surprised in the middle of the day by a big force of Israeli army bursting into their house which is close to the old mosque in Abu Dis. The Israelis brought Mohammed Abu Hilal A member of the family and handcuffed him, in an operation in the morning Then the soldiers made everyone go out of the house and searched it without giving any reason and then they left the house and they released Mohammed who was the youngest son of the owner of the house..

² 'Family Matters': Using Family Members to Pressure Detainees." - a report by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel - There is a link on camdenabudis.net/prisoners

³ There is more information about Rawan on the women's page of the Camden Abu Dis website.

- The Student Affairs office in the Al Quds University announced the arrest of four students from the university during March and all of these were residents of Abu Dis. The students' names are: Munther Hassan Khowalda, Jihad Yousef Funoon, Jihad Al Din Abed Alnasser Al Badawi and Akram Yousef Assadeh.

Prisoners' affairs

During the long years of the Occupation, hundreds of people from Abu Dis have been arrested, usually for peaceful resistance against the Occupation, such as demonstrations, just as in the rest of Palestine. Among these there have been many young people under the age of eighteen. At the end of March 2008, there were 76 prisoners from Abu Dis in Israeli jails. Among them there were 20 children. In addition there are currently more than 70 student prisoners from Al Quds University Abu Dis campus.

The prisoners from Abu Dis include three people imprisoned with no trial (the Israelis call this administrative detention). One of these is Mohammed Al Sarahneh, a teacher from a local school.

Many of these people have suffered bad treatment, physical and psychological torture, forced confessions, denial of family visits. There is further information on Abu Dis prisoners at

<http://www.camdenabudis.net/prisoners.html>

- Israeli sources revealed that two investigators had been suspended from the police centre in the Maale Adumim settlement last month as a result of a complaint presented by the Public Committee against Torture in Israel, and kept under house arrest until their own investigation. They were accused of torturing a Palestinian prisoner from the town of Aizariyeh in December last year. Material given to the investigation, which is being done by the investigation department of Justice together with people from the police, shows that one of the accused urinated on the Palestinian prisoner, tied his ears with rope and pressed on one of his eyes with a coin. According to the minutes of the investigation, they forced a stick into the backside of the prisoner. As well as the physical torture, they humiliated him with curses and spitting.
- The families of prisoners kept in Awfar Prison said that they had been subjected to daily, repeated beatings by the prison administration, and that the conditions of the prisoners were extremely badly by the prison guards and were not able to get the treatment they needed. During their visits, the prisoners had said that the prison guards provoked prisoners in order to punish them by isolating them and depriving them of visits, and they imposed high fines on them, strip-searched them and and the prison authorities reduced the amount of food they were allows.

- The Nafha Organisation for the Defence of Prisoners said that there had been a clear increase in the number of administrative detentions⁴ given to prisoners by the Israeli authorities. The organisation said in a report in the Al Quds newspaper that from the beginning of the new year to the beginning of March about 405 administrative detention orders had been given to people in different parts of the West Bank.

Abu Dis Boys' School

Details of the attack by Israeli Border Police on boys inside Abu Dis Boys' School on 14th February and the follow-up to this are available on the CADFA website www.camdenabudis.net

We haven't received any response or information from the Israeli side about reopening the investigation in the case since the Abu Dis School Head teacher asked for the enquiry to be reopened in the middle of last May.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is helpful information on human rights and international humanitarian law at the following United Nations site:

<http://www.ochr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/InternationalLaw.aspx>

Some important agreements and decisions which the Israeli occupying power are violating in their treatment of the Palestinian people are:

1. The Wall

The International Court of Justice asked Israel to stop work on the Separation Wall in the Palestinian occupied territories including East Jerusalem and the area around it, to destroy all the bits that are already built and to delete all the laws and decisions which the Israeli government had made in creating it (Hague decisions paragraph 133, 152 and 153 – Advisory Opinion of the ICJ, 9th July 2004)

2. Torture and the mistreatment of prisoners

There are many international agreements against torture and mistreatment of prisoners. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) reads: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." The UN Convention against Torture was signed in 1984.

3. Confiscation of lands

According to The Hague agreement signed in 1907 paragraph 152, occupation forces must not confiscate lands or properties from the people under occupation.

⁴ Arrest with no trial

4. Equal treatment of people (note the unequal treatment of people through the permit system and pressure on people around Jerusalem)

Israel is a signatory to the undertaking “to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 2, paragraph 1, signed 1966, in effect from 1976)

5. Right to family life

The same international agreement states that “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation... Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks”

This month’s report shows that the people of Abu Dis are suffering regular violations of all of these agreements and decisions. We call on the international community and all the supporters of the rights of the Palestinians to make some pressure on Israel as an occupying force to stop the violations and to guarantee their human rights and their rights under international humanitarian law.