



Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

Abu Dis Human Rights report

A month in Abu Dis, November 2020



Israeli vehicles block the road to make a checkpoint near Maale Adumim settlement outside Abu Dis.

Pressures on the people of Abu Dis

continued this month because of the Corona crisis, the Israeli occupation and the US election which took place in early November. The Corona crisis continued but, as this report shows, did not slow down the activities of the Israeli occupation in Palestine. The US election was important in Palestine because – while both candidates for president and their parties have supported Israel – Trump had taken a very pro-active stand in support of Israeli control of Jerusalem, settlement expansion and annexation and the Israeli authorities had been very encouraged to push towards annexation and further expansion. The month finished with Biden having won but no concession from Trump; Israel appeared to be using the time by activities in the Jordan Valley and agreeing more settlements.

One problem with a report based on one month in an on-going occupation is that we talk of things that change, particular things that happen, and often don't talk about the things that continue and have become (under occupation) "normal" even though they are clear violations and unbearable. In a discussion with women from Abu Dis, one said sadly how difficult this year had been. She has not been able to see her family (her parents and brothers and sisters) in Jerusalem since last December. This is because – years ago – the Israelis gave her a different coloured ID from her family (green instead of blue) and they use these colours to decide where they will allow people to go.

A second woman talked about the Wall, and how her children don't know life without the Wall (which went up from 2002 and progressively cut Abu Dis from Jerusalem). She said "they don't know Jerusalem, they don't know how we were free before." "Free?" said another woman. "We weren't free. Even then the Israelis didn't allow me to go to my village which I was born in."

"Not really free," said the second woman – "we were under occupation. But before the Wall we could go to Jerusalem or Jaffa or Haifa if we wanted to. Now we are really in a prison."

During this month, the Palestinian Authority resumed co-operation with the Israeli authorities after six months of refusing to co-operate with Israel because of the threat of annexation and Israel's withholding of taxes collected from Palestine but not returned to the Authority. The tax money was returned but the threat of annexation had not been removed, as was shown this month.

People in Abu Dis are trying to get on with their lives in a normal way but their lives are systematically interrupted by movement restrictions, separation from family members, economic and environmental problems. People are sadly accustomed to violence from the Israeli army that every month leaves a number of boys (usually) injured, families, including those with babies, suffering from tear gas, and sees a number of people violently arrested or returned home suffering from their time in jail and their families suffering from fines of thousands of shekels.



Israeli soldiers inside Abu Dis in Abu Hussein area

Across Palestine this month

Prisoners and administrative detention The Israeli policy of mass imprisonment of Palestinians continued. This month, 446 people were newly arrested from the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. This month 63 of them were under the age of 18 and sixteen were women.

The conditions inside are very cruel. This month, Kamal Abu Wahar (46) from Jenin, a prisoner who had been in jail for seventeen years, died inside jail.



Figure 1 Israeli army throwing tear gas near the University

There are currently over 350 Palestinian prisoners in administrative detention by Israel (imprisonment without trial). We have been told "In the past, Israel gave many people administrative detention for six months. People expected to get out at the end of six months. Now it has become routine for them to extend this imprisonment, they do it again and again."

Maher al-Akhras from Jenin who held a very lengthy hunger strike against his administrative detention won his case on 6th and was released on 26th November.



A Palestinian house being demolished by Israeli bulldozers in Jerusalem

Army violence This month two people were killed by the Israeli army. One was a young man Bilal Rawajbee from Iraq al-Tayah who was killed at Huwarra checkpoint when he was driving through the checkpoint. Another was shot at AzZayem checkpoint near Abu Dis - his story is written below on 25th November

House demolition This month 134 homes and a total of 214 buildings

belonging to Palestinians were destroyed by the Israeli army. In four cases, the owners did the demolition work themselves to avoid paying the Israelis the fees they would demand.

Settlement expansion This month, 660 donums of Essawiyeh land was taken 'for military use' - which is often a precursor of settlement development. The Israeli government made planning decisions to build 1257 new settlement units for Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem. These numbers represent a big expansion of the already huge area of Israeli only settlement across the West Bank and will lead to undoubted ongoing depths of pain.

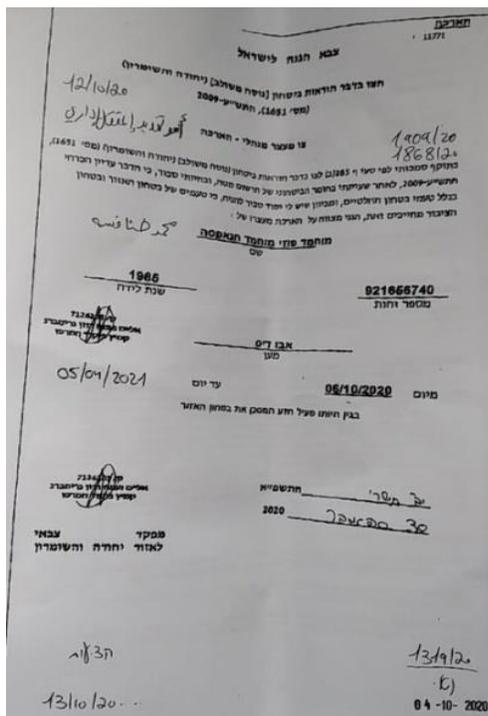
There was a major push to progress the take-over of the **Jordan Valley**. This was in the context of international discussion still about the Israeli plans to annexe much of the West Bank including the major agricultural area of the Jordan Valley. It has made little difference on the ground that Israel did not formally do this (as they said they would) in July as they are steadily taking it over nevertheless.. Israel has already established many settlements from north to south in the valley, but now they are pushing to take over the whole area, expelling the small Bedouin villages and putting checkpoints around the bigger villages. This month the Israelis destroyed the complete Bedouin village of Hamset al Baqeeya was destroyed - 80 people lost their homes when 70 buildings and constructions (including homes and barns) were razed to the ground, and solar panels and water wells were destroyed.

“With or without lockdown, our life in Palestine is blocked all the time by checkpoints and closures. Perhaps people all round the world understand now what the meaning of lockdown is— you can’t leave your house for months, or your town for months. The difference is that what we get are military orders, not health concerns”

In Abu Dis, this month:

There were now five Abu Dis prisoners on administrative detention - held in Israeli jails with no trial. These included Huthaifa Badr, whose term was increased this month. He was released in

December 2019 following a long hunger strike for his release. But they then imprisoned him again in May, gave him a 6-month term and have now renewed it.



Israeli military order extending administrative detention

The Israelis also reneged on their agreement with Ismael Khalaf, whom they had promised to release at the beginning of July. In fact on the day that he had been promised release, they issued him another six-month term. The page on the left with Hebrew writing is the military order given to Mohammed Salah in October when they gave him a second term.

There were around thirty other prisoners from Abu Dis in Israeli jails including at least four children. The Israeli authorities had have not returned the body of Ahmed Eriqat who was killed on 23rd June and his family continued to campaign for the return of his body so they could bury him.

Friday 6th November. After the midday prayer, there was a demonstration next to the mosque in Kubsa. The Israeli army threw tear gas from the other side of the Wall. They then came down into the town from the Cliff Hotel and began to shoot with rubber bullets. Three boys were hurt. They were treated by the Red Crescent in the street.

Thursday 12th November Huthaifa Badr, in Israeli jail, was given another 6-month term of administrative detention imprisonment without trial.

The Israeli army invaded the old side of Abu Dis – the area of Abu Hussein - around midday, where they invaded and searched a small mosque.

Friday 13th November. There was a protest stand near Abu Dis Youth Club in solidarity with Huthaifa and against administrative detention (imprisonment without trial). There was a march from there towards the west side of Abu Dis where the army stopped them near the military camp by throwing tear gas.

Saturday 14th In the early hours of the morning, the Israeli army invaded the house of Mohammed Hassan Fahed (aged 22).and searched it before arresting him.



Israeli soldiers arresting a young man in Abu Dis



View from a car window of a traffic jam caused by a military checkpoint.

Sunday 15th November a special day in Palestine remembering the declaration of the state of Palestine in 1989. Early in the morning the Israeli Adumim with a army blocked the road near Maale checkpoint, stopping cars, asking for IDs and car licences and causing a major slow-down on the road.

In the early evening there was a demonstration in Abu Dis which joined a demonstration from Aizariyeh at Kubsa, and there was army shooting and tear gas around the area until late in the evening.

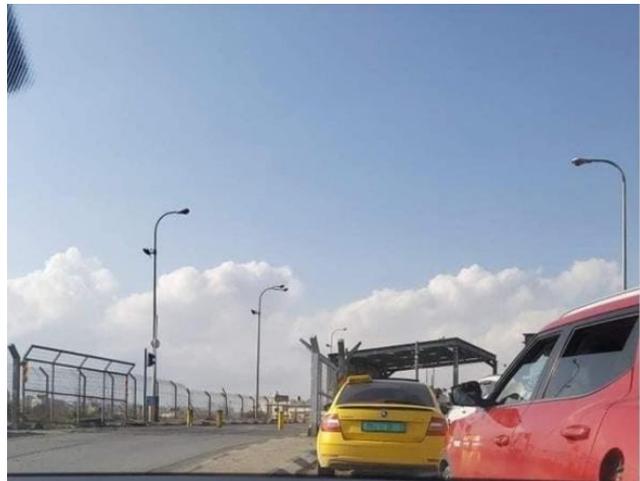
Separately, on this day the Israeli authorities granted approvals to a major project of 1257 settlement units in Jerusalem, on the east and south of Jerusalem in the area between the city and Bethlehem.

Monday 16th November At around 7 in the evening, with no apparent reason, the Israeli army started to shoot tear gas (a lot of it) from the other side of the Separation Wall into the Al Quds University and the street next to it.

Wednesday 18th November The Israeli army blocked the Container checkpoint, south of Abu Dis, for four hours in the late afternoon. Apparently this had also happened on other occasions when the checkpoint was being cleaned in relation to Corona.

Friday 19th November. The Israeli army threw tear gas from the other side of the Wall in Kubsa. People who were in the area (coming from the Mosque) said that there was no obvious reason at all. The tear gas spread through the whole area and affected a lot of people.

The Israeli army blocked the Container checkpoint, south of Abu Dis, for four hours in the late afternoon again. Apparently this related to “maintenance” works at the was checkpoint.



This and above, drivers take pictures of logjammed traffic caused by Israeli checkpoint closure at Container, south of Abu Dis.

Sunday 22nd November. Early in the morning the Israeli army blocked the road near Maale Adumim on the main way out of the area of Abu Dis, Aizariyeh and the area further south. They put us a checkpoint, stopping cars, asking for IDs and car licences and causing a major slow-down on the road.



Noor Shqair surrounded by Israeli soldiers, please see text.

Wednesday 25th November. A man of 33, Noor Shqair from Silwan, a father of a family was killed by the Israeli army near Azzayem checkpoint. The story is horrible: he apparently showed his ID to the soldiers and then was asked to show his driving licence which was out of date, so he drove off. Soldiers chased his car and shot him; they took him out of his car bleeding and left him in the street. He bled to death – he was given no help – and then his body was returned to his family.

Friday 27th November After the midday prayer, there was a demonstration next to the mosque in Kubsa. The Israeli army threw tear gas from the other side of the Wall. . They then came down into the town from the Cliff Hotel and began to shoot with rubber bullets. The army put a checkpoint near the military camp and shot more tear gas and bullets

Monday 30th November at around midnight, the Israeli army came into Abu Dis and next-door Aizariyeh. They found five trucks with tanks on that remove the sewage from septic tanks in the town – three of these tankers in Aizariyeh and two in Abu Dis Adumim police – and took them away to Maale station. After several houses they called the owners and told them to come and collect them – no one knew what they had been looking for. During the invasion when they were taking the cars, the soldiers shot live ammunition in the air around them.



Israeli army taking away sewage tankers from Abu Dis.

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