



Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

Abu Dis Human Rights report

A month in Abu Dis, June 2020

The human rights violations against people in Abu Dis and Palestine continued in June 2020 in a way that has become routine – 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 becoming 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. This month was worse: a young man (Ahmed Eriqat) was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers on 23rd June. At the time of writing (August), the Israelis still have not returned his body to his family.

Many other human rights issues – in the summer, the distribution of water taken from the Palestinian hills, at any time the issues of movement, passes, and residency – are not described in the actual actions listed below. The issue of the land at Suwanet Salah is explained below*

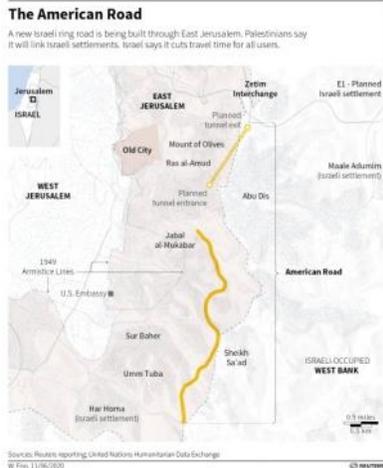
Across Palestine this month

In June 2020, two Palestinians were shot and killed by the Israeli army – one of them as Ahmed Eriqat from Abu Dis.

This month, 488 people were newly arrested from the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. Thirty-six of them were children under the age of 18.

This month a huge number of Palestinian houses or parts of houses under construction were destroyed by Israeli military order: forty-four (44), most of them in Jerusalem.

Settlement expansion-There was increasing work to support the extension of Israeli settlements in the north of the West Bank around the city of Nablus. New land confiscation



orders were given and five new settlers' roads were built. Work on the "American Road" took place this month, linking south Jerusalem to the settlements: making huge bridges across the Separation Wall to speed Israeli settlers to the West Bank settlements, while the cruelty of the Separation Wall continued to dominate the lives of Palestinians living close to it

Suwanet Salah

The area called Suwanet Salah is part of the land of Abu Dis. There were private properties under private ownership but part of it (that we are discussing here) used to be Waqf land. Before 1967, people donated land on which there would be a school and a sports field.

In 1964, in Jordanian times, the Arab Institute was built as an orphanage and primary school. After 1967, a college for science and technology was added to the school.

When Israel annexed Jerusalem to the State of Israel in 1967, the area next to the school and college (now the sports field and the empty land around it) was annexed to Jerusalem. This area included some private houses, but the land itself was Waqf land, donated for public use.

From 1967, the Israelis refused to allow the people of Abu Dis to do any building at all in that area. For example, boys from the school used to play football there, but when they wanted to build a wall so they didn't lose the ball, this was not allowed as the Israelis said this belonged to Jerusalem Municipality.

This is why the space remained empty and became the only football field available to Palestinians in the East Jerusalem area.



At that time the buildings nearby were still the Arab Institute and the College of Science and Technology which now had about 800 students and issued diplomas, and some private houses on the south and on the west. This became the main campus of Al Quds University in 1994. There were different parts of this university in other adjacent areas.

Under the Oslo Accords in 1993, the east side of this land (where the Al Quds main campus was) became part of Area B, but the west side was classified as part of the Jerusalem Municipality.

In 2002, when Israel started to build the Separation Wall on the west of Abu Dis, their plan was to take the sports field area inside Jerusalem. There was a strong struggle, led by the Al Quds University and supported by European governments – in particular Germany - to protect this space. They appeared to win as the Wall was eventually built in 2004 to the west of the sports field, but it remained classified as Jerusalem Municipality and there were conditions which said nothing should be built on it.

During this time of struggle, there were protest tents built on the area and the German government funded and environmental area where the university garden can still be found.

When the Israelis were working on the Wall in 2014, they found some historical remains which they took away. They put up the Wall which divided family areas, blocked off the centre of Jerusalem and caused huge harm to the people of the area.

Ten years after that, with international donations, the Al Quds University managed to build a sports faculty on another part of the land, but without building on the sports ground. Students and local people continued to use the sports ground for football, but the Higher Council did not use it for its formal matches, saying there were no proper facilities.

In 2016, the Al Quds University- encouraged by the Higher Council - put a small wall round the area and started to seek funds to develop this into a football pitch with a stadium and proper facilities.

The area right next to the university saw a lot of clashes with the Israeli army. In 2017, the Israelis opened a small security gate in that area, big enough for foot soldiers. This created a danger for the students of the sports faculty as they didn't know when soldiers would invade.

Around 2015, local investors started to build big blocks of flats in the local area, close to this land, solely for the use of people with Jerusalem IDs. As it was classed as within the Jerusalem Municipality, they could live there without losing their blue IDs even though they were on the other side of the wall from Jerusalem. Hundreds of families started to live there, pay taxes to Jerusalem although they got no services from the city at all.

In the same area too there has been pressure for years from the Israeli E1 project which was about settlement redevelopment. The Israeli government wanted to connect the settlements on the south side of Jerusalem with the settlements on the east side of Jerusalem.

In 2019, there was a huge worry in the area about a new plan that was in the air. There were local rumours of meetings between the Israelis and the University. This plan was to build a road to connect Har Homa settlement (south of Jerusalem) with Qidar settlement (east of Jerusalem and on Abu Dis land). In order to do this, they would need to go through/ past/ over the Wall from west to east. The Israelis were exploring a route from Har Homa to Surbaher to



Sheikh Sa'ed going on the west of the Wall and going through the Wall at Suwanet Salah (the area in question) and then on to Qidar. As part of this plan, there would be a special terminal through the Wall at Suwanet Salah specially for the Al Quds University students and faculty – though it would leave local people in the area with miles to go round to other terminals if they wanted to go to Jerusalem. Under this plan, the Israelis would build a military camp on the area we are now calling the sports field, to be in charge of this new 'terminal' in the Wall.

During this period the Israeli army came several times and destroyed several houses in Khalit Abed and Suwanet Salah. Some of these houses were old and built before Israel came to the area. But after Israel came, the land officially became "without owners" and destroyed anything that was built there, saying that there were no licences. Obviously the local people don't agree that there are no owners here – but they don't have the power to do anything about this. During July 2019, the Israelis destroyed six buildings in the area – there were huge clashes and people were hurt.

The Israelis have also stopped Palestinian building on the other side of the Wall at this point and have destroyed a building put there by the owner of some land on the other side on 31st Jan 2020.

On the night of 17th June, the Israeli army came and destroyed a house and the wall around the football field at Suwanet Salah (see introduction)

Part of a statement by Al Quds University:

On 17th June 2020 the Israeli army invaded the Al Quds University campus with dozens of soldiers, military vehicles and bulldozers. They destroyed the wall and the infrastructure of 'The International Football Stadium' that the Al Quds University is building on its main campus in Abu Dis. This is part of the on-going attacks on Al Quds University which are trying to make physical and mental destruction on the university and the area around it, and to stop the building of the only international-standard football field in the area.'

Part of a statement by the Higher Council for Youth and Sports:

The Higher Council condemns the destruction of the wall and the football pitch which belong to Al Quds University, which was built on the land of the main campus of Al Quds University in Jerusalem.

Note from CADFA

The people who own the land – the sports field and the empty land – are people from Abu Dis. The University put its hand on it to try to protect it, but the people of Abu Dis are not keen to call this land University land – it is Waqf land (Abu Dis community land). However everyone is together in wanting to resist further Israeli take-over of any part of the area.

In Abu Dis, this month:

Tuesday 2nd June Early in the morning, at round 3am the Israeli army invaded three houses in Abu Dis and arrested three young people aged 19-20: Mohammed Badr from the old side of Abu Dis, Mohammed Eriqat from the crossroad to the University and Mahmoud Waheish who lives near the military camp. This army invasion led to demonstrations and the army used tear gas and sound grenades and there was the sound of shooting everywhere in the town.



Friday 5th June After the Friday prayer, the Israeli army put a checkpoint in the middle of Abu Dis at the crossroads to the military camp; there was a demonstration and the Israeli army shot tear gas and rubber bullets. Three young people were wounded with rubber bullets and they were looked after by first responders in the street.

MOHANNAD'S STORY

Monday 8th June.

The Israeli army destroyed three mobile homes near to the terminal at Az Zaitouneh – They had been put there by the land owners from Essawiyeh to protect their lands, but unfortunately the treatment of Palestinian land owners by the Israeli army is the opposite of the treatment that settlers are given. If the latter put temporary homes on other people's land, it is often the prelude to serious settlement building and the loss of the land. But Palestinian structures – even on the land-owners' own land – are removed by the military.

Tuesday 9th June

The Israeli army invaded



the town at around 5am and went to the houses of three boys – all of them 15 years old - who had previously been wounded by army shooting, and had been recovering in hospital until two weeks previously. Their three

The Commission of Prisoners' Affairs published a report after a visit Awwad. In this, Mohammed described what happened to Mohannad to him after his arrest: [link to the report in Arabic](#)

“On 15th May, 2020, at around 10.30 in the night, I was walking in a street called Al Kharjeh in Abu Dis, which is near the military camp. Israeli soldiers started to shoot towards me. I was wounded in both legs. My left leg had the most serious wounds but on the right leg, the bullets entered and went out. I fell down. People came out of the houses and took me to Abu Dis Health Centre. When I got there I was unconscious and when I woke up I found myself in a hospital in Ramallah.

“I spent a week inside the hospital and then I was released. On 9th June at around 3 in the morning, while I was sleeping at home a soldier woke me. There were other soldiers in the house. He told me to go with him. When I said I couldn't walk, he started to shout at me. He told me to put on clothes – I refused, so they took me in my pyjamas. They tied my hands and made me walk about 50 metres. Then one of the soldiers asked me to jump over a wall. When I said I can't, one of the soldiers picked me up and threw me over the wall, which is about a metre high, and I just fell down on the ground.

“Then they put me in a jeep and they started to beat me. They beat me most on my legs, my stomach and my shoulders. When we arrived at the military camp in Abu Dis, I was pushed to sit on the stairs. A soldier came and kicked me on my right leg. When I said I was wounded, the soldier said that I deserved it.

“After that, they took me to an interrogation centre in Atarot [interrogation centre]. The interrogator put on the air cooler and the room became freezing. I asked if he would turn it off and he said it's not allowed to turn it off. I was in serious pain and I spent a whole day under this cooler. I asked for clothes or something to protect me but they would not let it happen. A prisoner who could see me wanted to give me a jumper but the interrogator would not allow it.

“All day I could feel pain and tiredness. At the end of the day, they moved me to Orfa prison. There the doctor of the jail said I should go to a hospital so they sent me to Affouleh military - I hospital – I spent the night there and then they sent me to Al Jalameh jail [which is miles from Orfa]”

homes were searched, and damage was done to furniture and to family cars. All three of them were arrested: Mohannad Awwad had had seven bullets in his two legs



(from live ammunition), Younes Halabiyeh had had two bullets, one in his arm and one in his foot, Ahmed Mohsen had had a bullet in his knee which had done huge damage and threatened the loss of his whole leg. All of them were still having medical treatment, but none of them were allowed to take their medicine with them.

Ahmed's father said that Waleed Mohsen, their main door had been destroyed by the army (picture) and the family woke up to find soldiers inside their rooms. Others things were broken (the picture is a broken wardrobe). The family was pushed out of the house and the army interrogated Ahmed on his own inside the house. Eventually the soldiers took Ahmed away, without telling the family where they were going, and leaving them all very worried about his health situation.

Thursday 11th June The Israeli army arrived at 3am and searched the house of Mohammed Darwish (22) on University Street and arrested from his house. There were demonstrations following this arrest and the army threw tear gas and sound grenades.



Friday 12th June After the Friday prayer, the Israeli army put a checkpoint in the middle of Abu Dis at the crossroads to the military camp and began to check people's IDs. There was a demonstration and the Israeli army shot tear gas all over the town.

Sunday 14th June At 3 in the morning, the Israeli army invaded two houses in Abu Dis,



searched the houses and arrested two young men, Morad Rabee and Mustafa Naifeh. There were clashes in the old side of Abu Dis.

Wednesday 17th June On the night of 17th June, the Israeli army came and destroyed a house and the wall around the football field at Suwanet Salah (see explanation in the introduction)

Friday 19th June After the Friday prayer, the Israeli army put a checkpoint in the middle of Abu

Dis at the crossroads to the military camp and began to check people's IDs. There was a demonstration around Kubsa and the crossroads to the military camp. The Israeli army shot tear gas all over the town and the Red Crescent reported that seven young people had been wounded.

Saturday 20th June In the late afternoon, there was teargas and shooting from the military camp, towards the areas of Al Ras and the beginning of University Street.

Tuesday 23rd June in the morning the Israeli army put a checkpoint on the way to Maale Adumim. The Israelis were stopping traffic, checking IDs of Palestinian drivers.

In the afternoon, there was a terrible incident at the Container Checkpoint south of Abu Dis. A young man, Ahmed Eriqat was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers, on the day of his sister's wedding. We were told that he was left bleeding and then he died. We cannot know what happened; it was an appalling event and for all in Abu Dis seemed a repeat of many awful events in the past.



Later the Israelis circulated a video which suggested that Ahmed may have been blackmailed and used the checkpoint as a way of committing suicide, by driving towards a soldier, knowing on the basis of previous tragedies that he would be shot and killed? We cannot know if there was an accident but of course if this story is true, it only deepens the tragedy. But there is no suggestion that he was armed or dangerous to soldiers and whatever he meant, the armed soldiers could have arrested him, should not have shot him



and could have got help for him when he had been hurt. The issue still remains that there should not be armed soldiers ready to kill in the middle of a civilian area. – whatever Ahmed meant, this should not have killed him.

At around this same time, there was an Israeli army invasion to a metal workshop in Wadi al-Jheer. The army took some of their tools away.

When news reached Abu Dis of Ahmed's death, huge demonstrations erupted across the town. The army responded with tear gas and rubber bullets and there was at one point a fire near the mosque in Kubsa caused by tear gas cannisters that were thrown by soldiers.

Weds 24th June – Demos continued protesting at the killing of Ahmed Eriqat the day before. These were mainly at the crossroads to University Street and in University Street itself. The army responded with tear gas and rubber bullets and there was at one point a fire near grounds of Al Quds University caused by tear gas cannisters that were thrown in by soldiers.

Israeli settlers took over a piece of land near to al Khan al Ahmar and put a fence around it, probably in anticipation of 1st July and annexation



Thursday 25th June – The Israeli army invaded the house of Hamzeh Eriqat at 3am – a close relative of Ahmed – He was arrested for something he put on Facebook in relation to the killing of his cousin by the army.

Friday 26th June – Abu Dis eyewitnesses called this “the teargas day”. The army started putting teargas all over Abu Dis from the

morning onwards. There were large demonstrations by young people against the killing of Ahmed Eriqat. Thirty-seven people were wounded by rubber bullets or suffered from the tear gas shot by Israeli soldiers. Two houses on the east of Abu Dis were set on fire as a result of throwing tear gas cans into the houses.

Saturday 27th June – The Israeli army invaded three houses early in the morning – breaking the door of one of them in order to enter - and arrested three youths–Qassam Halabiyeh (18), Bilal Halabiyeh (20), Badr Halabiyeh (in his 20s).

Monday and Tuesday 29th and 30th – The Israeli army invaded Jabal al-Baba, a Bedouin village near to Abu Dis that is very much under threat from the E1 settlement project. The army searched the Jabal al Baba public garden and the kindergarten and made the residents feel that the threatened annexation had started and that the push to make them leave the area had intensified. (The suggested date for annexation was 1st July)

Tuesday 30th – The Israeli army had not returned the body of Ahmed Eriqat, and the women in his family organised a women’s demo which went to the military camp, calling for the return of his body so they could bury it.

