



Palestinesolidarityproject.org (972 050-320-2854)

Overview

June has been an eventful month for the activists and residents of Beit Ommar. Over the past several weeks, soldiers arrested three members of the Beit Ommar Popular Committee and several other local and international activists during the weekly protests at Beit Ommar. Israeli forces also arbitrarily arrested four boys from Beit Ommar, two during a night raid. The Israeli Civil Administration also issued a new round of demolition orders to Beit Ommar residents, while soldiers destroyed fruit stalls along Route 60 again in what has become an annual effort to cripple the local economy.

Despite the recent attempts to damage the Beit Ommar community and suppress its popular resistance movement, this month has seen many positive developments: Last week, the Center for Freedom began its third annual summer camp, this year with a theme inspired by the strength of Palestinian political prisoners.

Soldiers Arrest Four Beit Ommar Activists at Weekly Protests

During this month alone, IOF forces have beaten and arrested four Beit Ommar residents and activists during weekly protests against the illegal Karmeit Tsur settlement:

On June 9th, around 30 local Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists held a demonstration against the ongoing theft of Beit Ommar land. Over 50 Israeli soldiers attempted to stop the demonstration, declaring the area a 'closed military zone'. They then beat the protestors, repeatedly kicked a Popular Committee member, and arrested

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The Center's greenhouse project, designed the project to support local farmers and help them maintain control of their land, has also had a successful start: So far local farmers have built two greenhouses, with six more to follow.

In addition to these exciting events, the nonviolent struggle against the Occupation continues to provide hope. Local and international activists continue to participate in protests here in Beit Ommar and elsewhere in the West Bank in spite of regular violence and arrests, and Palestinians persist in their daily fight for their rights and their lives.

Yousef Abu Maria, the spokesperson of the Beit Ommar Popular Committee, along with an Israeli activist.

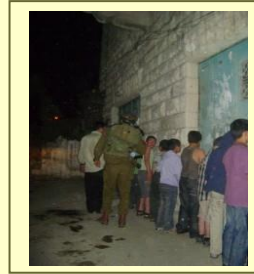
On Monday 11th, Israeli settlers began to harass local farmers and activists who were working on Palestinian land, calling them 'dogs' and 'Nazis' and throwing stones. When Israeli soldiers arrived at the scene, one immediately grabbed Popular Committee Member Mousa Abu Maria (aged 35) by the arm and then dragged him to the ground. Four more then surrounded Mousa and hit him in

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Israeli Forces Arrest Two Children in a Night Raid

At approximately 2:30 a.m. on Monday, June 11th, Israeli Occupation Forces based in the illegal settlement of Karmeit Tzur raided several houses in Beit Ommar, arresting two children: Hamouda Jamal Abu Hashim, aged 13, and Malik Jawad Za'ariq, aged 15. During the assault, IOF forces fired live ammunition, tear gas, and sound bombs. After being subjected to intimidation and interrogated in the early hours of the morning, a tactic widely used by the Israeli military, Hamouda was released. Malik is currently still in detention.

The Israeli military frequently arrests and detains minors, often without charge. Aside from the obvious trauma of being arrested, often during a nighttime raid, these children also face intimidating and threatening interrogations, aimed



Soldiers line children up during the night raid on Beit Ommar

at extracting false confessions and implicating Palestinian organizers. They are held in overcrowded prisons, often alongside adult prisoners, where conditions are poor. Detention also often results in the child missing crucial periods of schooling and exams. Child detainees are usually denied any contact with their family while they await trial.

Beit Ommar Residents Receive Seven New Demolition Orders

On June 18th, the Israeli Civil Administration issued a new round of demolition orders for structures built on privately-owned Palestinian land in Beit Ommar, including five homes and two wells. That evening, soldiers distributed notices demanding that residents evacuate their homes by July 3rd, giving residents- all of whom have documented proof of ownership that predates the establishment of the nearby Karmeit Tzur settlement in 1982- less than three weeks to leave before their homes are destroyed.

One of the condemned wells, owned by farmer Ibrahim Arar, was built just four months ago. The well, which cost him over \$15,000 of his savings, enabled him to irrigate his fields and is crucial for maintaining his trees. If carried out, the demolitions will threaten both his plants and his source of income.

These demolition orders mark the sixteenth attempt by Israel to expel the residents of Beit Ommar from their lands: Beit Ommar has received 15 demolition orders prior to the June

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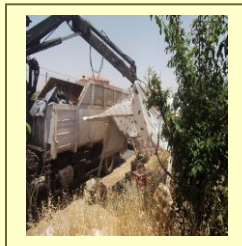
“Over the past six months, settlers in Karmeit Tzur have built over three hundred new houses while Palestinians are forbidden from building any new structures on their own land.”



One of the condemned homes in Beit Ommar.

Israeli Soldiers Destroy Palestinian Fruit Stalls, Arrest Fruit Seller

On Thursday, June 14, 2012, settlers and Israeli Occupation Forces launched an attack on local fruit vendors along the Route 60 highway just outside of Beit Ommar. Local farmers use this road, which is the main highway between Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron, to sell their produce during harvest months, as the military closed the main produce market in Beit Ommar in 2007.



A crane destroys a Palestinian fruit stall along Route 60

Several demolition trucks, accompanied by police and army vehicles, drove along the road, systematically confiscating Palestinian farmers' fruit and destroying their stalls. No justification or reason was given by the soldiers for these attacks, which have occurred annually since local farmers were forced to move to the road to sell their fruit.

Seventeen-year-old Mohammed Khader Awad, one of the fruit sellers whose stall was being demolished,

was also arrested during the destructions.

Agriculture is at the heart of Beit Ommar's economy. Located on Route 60, Beit Ommar once had the largest fruit market in the southern West Bank. The continued assaults on the livelihoods of Beit Ommar residents represent Israel's attempts to cripple the local Palestinian economy. While Palestinian stalls are routinely destroyed, settlers are free to sell their produce – fruit grown on stolen Palestinian land – by

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Greenhouse Construction Supports Palestinian Resistance

Recently, farmers in Beit Ommar have been trying a new method to defend their land against Israeli colonization. As part of their strategy to support farmers and develop Palestinian land in Area C the Center for Freedom and Justice has started a land rehabilitation program called "The Greenhouse Project". The project aims to protect Palestinian land from further confiscation by encouraging local farmers to keep working in close proximity to nearby Israeli settlements, despite the daily harassment by settlers. The program also aims to generate substantial income for local farmers, helping them to make a living despite the economic burden placed on them by the occupation.

In April 2012, a Palestinian farmer constructed two greenhouses on his farmland in the southern part of Beit Ommar, near the illegal Karmeit Tsur

settlement. The first two greenhouses, the initial stage of a project to build 8 greenhouses in total, measure 600 square meters and will be used to grow vegetables. Construction of the greenhouses was made possible by generous donations from the family of Kjetil Bjørlo, was completed on April 22nd of this year, and the first plum tomatoes and beans were planted at the beginning of May.

The greenhouses, built by agricultural specialists, are located only 60 meters from the illegal Israeli settlement of Karmeit Tsur that was established on stolen Palestinian land in 1984. So far, the new greenhouses have remained untouched by the settlers, providing a successful means of cultivation and also of resisting occupation. Growing crops in greenhouses also allows farmers to produce more than one vegetable crop each year.

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the face with their rifle butts before arresting him. International activists who attempted to prevent the arrest Mousa from this assault were beaten, dragged, and stamped upon repeatedly.

On June 16th, at the weekly demonstration against the continued expansion of the Karmeit Tsur settlement, and unlawful imprisonment of Palestinian footballer Mahmoud Sarsak, soldiers began kicking and hitting the activists with shields in order to force them to leave the Palestinian land.

During the violence, soldiers grabbed Beit Ommar resident and activist Sagar Abu Maria by his

ankles and dragged him along the ground before arresting him.

At the June 23rd protest, IOF forces surrounded and arrested Younes Arar, a Beit Ommar resident and Popular Committee member, as well as two other international activists.

The Israeli Occupation Forces, through their use of violence and imprisonment, routinely prevent Beit Ommar residents from reaching and cultivating their own land near the illegal settlements. The targeted arrests of Popular Committee members and other local activists represent yet another attempt by the Israeli state to suppress Palestinian resistance in Beit Ommar.

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When the eight greenhouses are completed, they will provide an important source of income for the village, income that the project's designers hope will provide for additional greenhouse construction through the recycling of investment money:

Once the farmer who owns the greenhouses generates enough profit to be able to pay back the loan from Center for Freedom and Justice, the money will be given to another farmer so that he too may benefit from the project.



Inside view of a completed greenhouse

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the settlements along route 60.

The use of violence and intimidation by the occupying forces is a tactic employed repeatedly in order to force Palestinian farmers to leave their land. This strategy facilitates further confiscation of Palestinian land by the Israeli state and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements.

Demolition Orders from page 2

18th orders. Over the past six months, settlers in Karmeit Tzur have built over three hundred new houses while Palestinians are forbidden from building any new structures on their own land. Many still build without Israeli permission- which is rarely given- but must do so at the risk of losing their homes, their incomes, and their stability.



The well owned by Ibrahim Arar

The Center for Freedom Begins Its Third Annual Summer Camp

On Monday June 25th, the Center for Freedom and Justice began its third annual summer camp for Palestinian youth from the Arroub refugee camp and the neighboring village of Beit Ommar.

The camp, which will run for 21 days and serves 150 Palestinian children ages 7-15, was created in response to the problems faced by Palestinian children: During the summers, most of the children in Beit Ommar have nothing to do and end up spending the majority of their time on the streets without supervision or engaging activities. At the same time, they continue to suffer from the effects of the Israeli occupation- such as night raids and demolitions of their homes- without having a healthy way to deal with their anger, fear, and frustration.

To address this situation, the Center started a summer camp in 2009 to provide Palestinian children with a positive environment in which they could have fun whilst engaging with the ways that the violence of the

Occupation has disrupted their lives. Last year's summer camp, named the "Freedom Flotilla Summer Camp" by the camp counselors, had over 100 participants. The camp offered an array of educational, recreational and cultural activities, including sports, English lessons, and dance. Counselors also ran discussions on a series of topics, such as settlement expansion, Israel's "separation barrier," international law, conflict resolution and human rights.

This year's camp, named "Solidarity Summer Camp" in support of Palestinian political prisoners and the nonviolent resistance movement, offers an even wider range of activities, including arts and crafts, drama, traditional Palestinian dance classes, music, sports, and gardening programs. Campers will also participate in workshops and training on nonviolent conflict resolution, the meaning of democracy and their role in it, personal and national identity, and the role of civil society.

Many of these activities will help the campers explore their experiences

"The Center for Freedom Center for Freedom's summer camp gives Palestinian youth a chance to enjoy what the Israeli occupation has systematically denied them: the chance just to be children."

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Summer Camp from page 5

and identities as Palestinians living under occupation, while giving them an outlet to express their emotions. At the same time, the camp will educate youth about equality, democracy, and non-violence so that they can spread these messages throughout Palestinian society and continue the non-violent struggle for freedom.

In addition to helping with the personal development of Beit Ommar youth, the camp also encourages connections between them and Palestinian children throughout the West Bank. Campers go on weekly field trips throughout the West Bank, and visit with other day camps twice a week in order to make new friends and build relationships between the residents of different areas in the West Bank.

Most importantly, through its program of enriching experiences and educational opportunities, the Center for Freedom's summer camp gives Palestinian youth a chance to enjoy what the Israeli occupation has systematically denied them: the chance just to be children.



Children working on an art project during the Center's day camp

About Us

The Palestine Solidarity Project is an initiative dedicated to opposing the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land through nonviolent direct action. It was founded in the summer of 2006 in the village of Beit Ommar in the Southern West Bank, where it is currently based.

PSP is envisioned as a project dedicated to supporting Palestinian communities in their fight against the Israeli Occupation. For many of the areas we work with, simply remaining on their land in the face of intimidation, violence, economic strangulation, and a history of forced displacement, is an act of resistance.

Our work is funded by grants and donations from individuals around the world who support the struggle for a free Palestine through nonviolent resistance. Any amount helps our work in regenerating the local economy and covering the legal costs of Palestinians who risk their lives in fighting the Occupation. We also welcome international and Israeli volunteers in Beit Ommar, along with other grass-roots Palestinian organizations, to work with us in achieving this goal. To donate or volunteer with us, please visit our website.