

## “Our land is our land” Palestinians’ tales in the olive harvest season



When an elderly Palestinian farmer chants, “If I have flour and oil, I clap and sing,” or “the olive oil is the house’s pillar,” he does not simply recite proverbs. These inherited sayings speak to the story of the olive tree witness to Palestinian history, rooted in the memory of land and people.

It stands resilient against time and settlers alike, yet has not escaped the barbarism and rampage of colonialism: it has been uprooted, burnt, and systematically neglected.

The frequency of settler attacks on olive pickers has surged from the north of the West Bank to its south, from east to west. Farmers face daily confrontations with settlers who raid their lands and prevent them from harvesting their olives.

This is organised, systematic terror, carried out under the protection of the Israeli occupation army and supported by Israeli policies and legislation that grant settlers immunity and relieve them of any accountability.

Resistance Committee Against the Wall and Settlements

Amir Daoud, Director-General of Documentation at the Resistance Committee, told Noon-Post that from the start of the olive harvest season in the first week of October to the end of November, the committee’s teams recorded 259 attacks

against olive pickers and farmers 41 of which were carried out by the occupation army, 218 by settlers.

He added: “The most targeted governorates were Ramallah with 83 incidents, followed by Nablus with 69, then Hebron with 34. These numbers represent a dangerous index of escalation, and show the targeting is systematic rather than random.”

Daoud explained that the damage is large and layered: there are direct material losses from damage or theft of the olives, destruction of more than 1,070 olive trees in this season alone.

There are also psychological and moral harms resulting from repeated attacks and the constant feeling of danger while working the land many farmers were deprived of entering their own lands or were forced to abandon them out of fear for their lives.

He affirmed that the attacks in Areas B and C reflect a single reality: the occupation treats the entire West Bank as under its full control, regardless of the administrative classifications. Area B is formally under Palestinian Authority administrative responsibility, yet the occupation does not respect the division and continues to carry out incursions and attacks there, just as it does in Area C, which is under full Israeli security control.

That means the Palestinian farmer does not feel safe even in territories supposedly under his own national administration.

In a related development, the Israeli far-right movement Im Tirtzu published an online petition on its official digital platforms, urging the leadership of the occupation army to reconsider the policy of allowing Palestinians to harvest olives in areas near settlements and major transit routes.

The petition stated that the continued allowance of Palestinian entry into such areas constitutes a “security risk” for Jewish residents. On October 5 the movement announced that it had posted banners demanding the end of the harvest season.

Daoud said: “In fact, following those petitions we witnessed an unprecedented escalation in settler attacks on olive pickers this year. The main reason is settlers and the Israeli army exploiting the conditions of war and the ongoing aggression against our people to expand their field presence in the West Bank, especially in rural and agricultural areas.

Settlers feel protected by Israeli law, supported by the government that has provided them with weapons and immunity. That’s why this year we saw much more violent, bold behaviour in attacks from direct beating to tree destruction

and equipment theft all in the absence of any accountability.”

The Israeli newspaper \*Haaretz reported that settler attacks have turned the olive harvest season into a dangerous event, a looming catastrophe, as Palestinian lands have become an open arena for repeated attacks on farmers and their trees.

Daoud explained that this shift reflects the transformation in Israeli public thought after the far-right ascended to power. There is no longer any tolerance even for Israeli or international voices promoting peace or justice; settlers today regard anyone standing with the Palestinian as an “enemy,” regardless of nationality.

Thus attacks on international solidarity activists have become part of a systematic policy aimed at hiding occupation crimes and preventing any international witnesses on the ground.

In the so-called “friction zones,” the residents repeatedly clash with settlers during the olive harvest, who forcefully prevent them from reaching their lands and harvesting their yield.

Take the case of the village Beit Iksa, one of the besieged Jerusalem-area villages, where the occupation authorities require residents to obtain permits to even step outside their front doors. Like many Palestinian villages, its olive harvest season has transformed from one of blessing into one of war and struggle over land, people, and trees.

In this context, Daoud pointed to the most sensitive file: the “friction lands” behind the annexation and expansion wall, totalling more than 260,000 dunams. Farmers need an occupation permit just to enter their land.

He added: “The occupation uses these permits as a tool of extortion and prevention, and in many cases entry is allowed for only a few days; even then the farmers face attacks from settlers or soldiers in a scene that summarises the racist colonial system’s attitude toward the land and its legitimate owner.”

Daoud noted that settlers did not limit themselves to stealing olives and equipment they even stole the very atmosphere of the season. He said: “We saw filmed footage of them picking Palestinian olives and celebrating on ground that is not theirs. One of the most provocative scenes is the occupation and settler attempt to falsify the cultural moment and steal Palestinian identity symbols.

To the Palestinian the olive tree is not merely a source of oil, but a symbol of belonging and roots. When a settler picks the olives or steals the yield in front of cameras, he tries to say the land is his. But the truth remains: this land was and will remain Palestinian no matter how they try to falsify it.”

He emphasized that the value of the olive tree for a Palestinian farmer is immense it is not just a tree but a familial and national memory. Many farmers pass olive trees to their children just as they pass on the house or the name. The tree is witness to history and survival. Therefore to defend it is to defend oneself and Palestinian existence.

He pointed out that the occupation has turned the harvest season into an annual battle, and that the weak yield this year is due to the difficulty of reaching lands because of military restrictions which leads to a drop in income for thousands of rural families that depend on olives as a primary livelihood. He confirmed that direct losses are estimated in the millions of shekels, together with the social impact on farming communities.

In another context, Daoud described the role of the Resistance Committee in supporting and enhancing the resilience of Palestinian farmers: “The committee works on several tracks; field work through daily presence in threatened areas and accompanying farmers; legally, by documenting violations and submitting them to international institutions; socially, by supporting national campaigns such as ‘Olive 2025’ which strengthen the spirit of resilience and volunteering. We consider ourselves a shield protecting the Palestinian farmer against settlement.”

In his closing remarks, Daoud issued a stark message to the international community: “Enough silence and waiting. The international community must move from condemnation to action, and impose accountability on the occupation state, and provide international protection for the Palestinian farmers who defend their land with bare hands. The olive tree must remain a symbol of justice and rights, not a victim of aggression and impunity.”

80% of the olives in Silwad went unharvested

Raed Hamed, Mayor of Silwad, told NoonPost that about 80% of the olive trees were deprived of harvesting this year, with only about 10% of the usual yield collected. This is due to repeated settler attacks on pickers and foreign solidarity activists, who were violently assaulted.

Settlers, aided by the Israeli army, expelled the farmers from their lands and prevented them from harvesting in several areas of the town — including AlBurj, Bab alGharas, AlNasibiyah, Wadi alBalat, and the Ain alHaramiyah area.

It is noted that these areas are classified as “B” under the Oslo Accords (under Palestinian civil control), while other parts fall under Area “C”.

Hamed noted that farmers used to head annually to their lands for harvesting even after the October7 war; however, since the establishment of a settlement

outpost on Silwad lands in December 2024, settlers have prevented farmers from servicing their lands by ploughing, pruning, fertilising and other agricultural activities.

He added: “Settlers didn’t just stop us from harvesting olives; they physically assaulted our farmers and foreign supporters, stole harvesting tools and farmers’ equipment and olives, burned vehicles and stole a tractor which they returned after hours following Palestinian liaison intervention.”

Hamed said settlers cut and smashed olive trees; and engaged in overgrazing on planted land, resulting in destruction of many trees. “Thousands of dunams were inaccessible to farmers, not only around the outpost but across all olive-planted areas from Silwad’s mountains to the mountains of Atara, Yabrud and Sinjil.”

He explained that this harvest season was unlike previous ones: weak and meagre. The main reason is settler prevention of land servicing and grazing destruction. As for the value of the olive tree to the Palestinian farmer, Hamed stressed that it is not merely a fruit-bearing tree but a symbol and pillar of Palestinian identity.

“The olive tree for the Palestinian is not like elsewhere. It represents our historical roots and identity transmitted by fathers and grandfathers. It is a sacred tree in Islam and represents the Palestinian’s adherence to his land and his olives.

Even though its financial return is lower than yields from grapes or almonds or cherries, the Silwad farmer insists on growing it because it is part of his being and his national identity. The struggle with the occupation is a struggle over land in all its historical, social and symbolic dimensions.”

In closing Hamed said that Palestinian residents face the occupation and settlers alone in towns like Silwad, Sinjil, Al-Mughayyir, Turmusayya and Qusra with settler attacks occurring daily in the absence of a unified national plan guiding local bodies and citizens.

He added: “Despite the presence of foreign solidarity activists, the attacks continue unabated, so we direct our message to international institutions of all orientations and interests: the attacks on Palestinians and solidarity activists are happening in front of the cameras, yet we see no serious action, even as the violations escalate day after day.”

“Olive-hours harvested in blood” — Turmusayya

Activist Awad Abu Samra from Turmusayya described for Noon Post the brutal settler attacks on residents of Turmusayya and Al-Mughayyir during the olive harvest season in the Al-Thalja and Al-Khalla areas between the two

towns. These zones, classified as Area B, do not require coordination to enter.

Abu Samra recounted: “About fifty settlers from the hilltop youth coming from nearby outposts and from the Shilo settlement next to Turmusayya carried out a savage attack on farmers and farm women, using clubs and sharp tools, resulting in a woman from Al Mughayyir being seriously wounded, in addition to a number of foreign volunteers who were fractured and injured.”

He added that the settlers not only assaulted the farmers, but also torched and incapacitated ten agricultural vehicles, stole olives, farming tools and even the farmers’ food.

The Israeli occupation army arrived on site and supported the settlers in their attack: it threatened the farmers with its weapons and fired gas canisters at them, then forcibly expelled them from their lands, allegedly claiming the area was a “closed military zone,” despite being formally classified Area B under the Oslo Accords.

He asked: “If the area was really a military closure, then is it closed only to Palestinians? Why were the settlers allowed to stay there? They spread their blankets under the olive trees in front of our eyes, picked our olives with sticks and stole our yield. Our land has become open prey to settlers, and forbidden to us its rightful owners.”

Abu Samra said that settlers felled some 700 olive trees just a week ago in the Marjal Si’ area between the lands of Abu Falah and Turmusayya, many of them over 30 years old. They also attacked pickers in Wadi Amr, Al Zawiya and Al Jabla.

He noted that Turmusayya has long suffered repeated settler attacks since the establishment of Shilo settlement in 1976, around which today numerous outposts exist.

He stressed that this year’s losses for Turmusayya’s residents are huge: they were deprived of access to more than 7,000 dunams of their land due to settler attacks. “The town used to produce around 200,000 tins of olive oil annually; this year they cannot produce more than 50,000 tins,” he said.

Describing the season he said: “This season is very scant. I’m in my sixties and I have never witnessed a worse season than this. The reason is the farmers’ denial of land servicing and care. As we always say: if you want the tree to give you, you must give it.

The settlers deliberately prevent us from accessing our lands so they can claim they are abandoned, to justify later their seizure as “absentee property”.”

In his closing remarks Abu Samra conveyed his deep connection to the olive

tree, describing it as home, symbol, heritage and banner. He said firmly: “I’d rather die on my land than be displaced from it.

We will not tire or give up, and we will not allow the settler thief to expel us from our land and consider himself its owner. We will not allow a repeat of the 1948 Nakba. Our land is our honour, and our steadfastness and faith are the basis of defending it.”

Kafr Malek & Q̄bar between prevention and detention

As with Turmusayya and Silwad, Kafr̄Malek did not escape settler attacks and the army, as residents tried to reach their olive lands behind the iron gate on the bypass road adjacent to the village.

Thousands of dunams of agricultural land remained inaccessible to villagers, causing losses estimated in the millions of shekels. Settler mobs attacked olivēpickers in an area known as “Al̄Manatir” inside the village lands, assaulted them physically and sprayed pepper gas several farmers suffered burns and asphyxiation.

Despite the assault, Kafr̄Malek’s residents resisted the settlers and managed to force them to retreat a scene that embodies their resilience and attachment to their land amid danger and aggression.

Dr. Fahd Abu al̄Haj from Q̄bar told Noon̄Post: “In front of global news agencies and foreign supporters, the Israeli army told farmers they had no objection to their entering their lands to pick olives. We agreed to set off at 7 a.m. toward our lands behind the iron gate on the Southwest side of the town.

The army opened the gate and let us in, but after about 200̄meters in the area known as Dakak soldiers stopped us and prevented further advance toward our lands, forcing us to return. They prevented us from harvesting despite a decision from the Israeli Supreme Court allowing us entry and harvesting.”

He added: “And they didn’t stop there; the settler spokesman told us the land is not ours and we must leave to Jordan. I said clearly: we will not leave this country, and we will stay in it forever.”

He went on to explain that the occupation army arrested him and several youths from the village while they tried to harvest olives, taking them to an unknown destination before releasing them later that day. He added that settlers stole harvesting equipment, damaged and stole farmers’ vehicles.

He explained: “The occupation prevented Q̄bar’s farmers from reaching their lands in the Shab al̄Maqshir, ‘Ain al̄Jame’ and ‘Ain al̄Rahalah areas about 6,000 dunams and prevented them from gathering the yield of more than 30,000 olive trees.

This caused losses estimated at more than 50,000 shekels. In addition, the town lost more than 2,800 dunams to the settlement outpost. As for me, I could not harvest the yield from 1,100 olive trees on my 36 dunam plot.”

Abu al-Haj described his relationship with his land and olive trees in moving words: “My piece of land is the air I breathe, my soul and life are in it. I was born and raised on its soil. This land knows no one but me, and it knows no alien settler. I tended it, watered it, pruned it, ploughed it, preserved it and harmonised with its trees and stones until they began to bear fruit for me.

This land is our land, and we must keep it. We will not surrender to occupation. Our loss is great, but our Lord will compensate us. We will return to it once, twice and three times, for the Palestinian will is greater and stronger than all their weapons, bombs and bullets.”

In this season, our Palestinian blood mixed with our pure, immaculate olive oil goodness ran mingled with pain, and a season that was meant to bring peace instead turned into a battle on olive trees and their keepers. The green gold of Palestine, its precious treasure, the foundation of its homes and inheritance, were targeted.

This sacred symbol did not escape the settlers’ brutality and the occupation’s aggression: they cut branches as they cut hope, and set fire to roots as they ignite hearts. And yet, Palestinian oil remains witness to steadfastness, the scent of soil mingled with blood telling the world that land cannot be violated as long as someone guards it with blood and certainty.