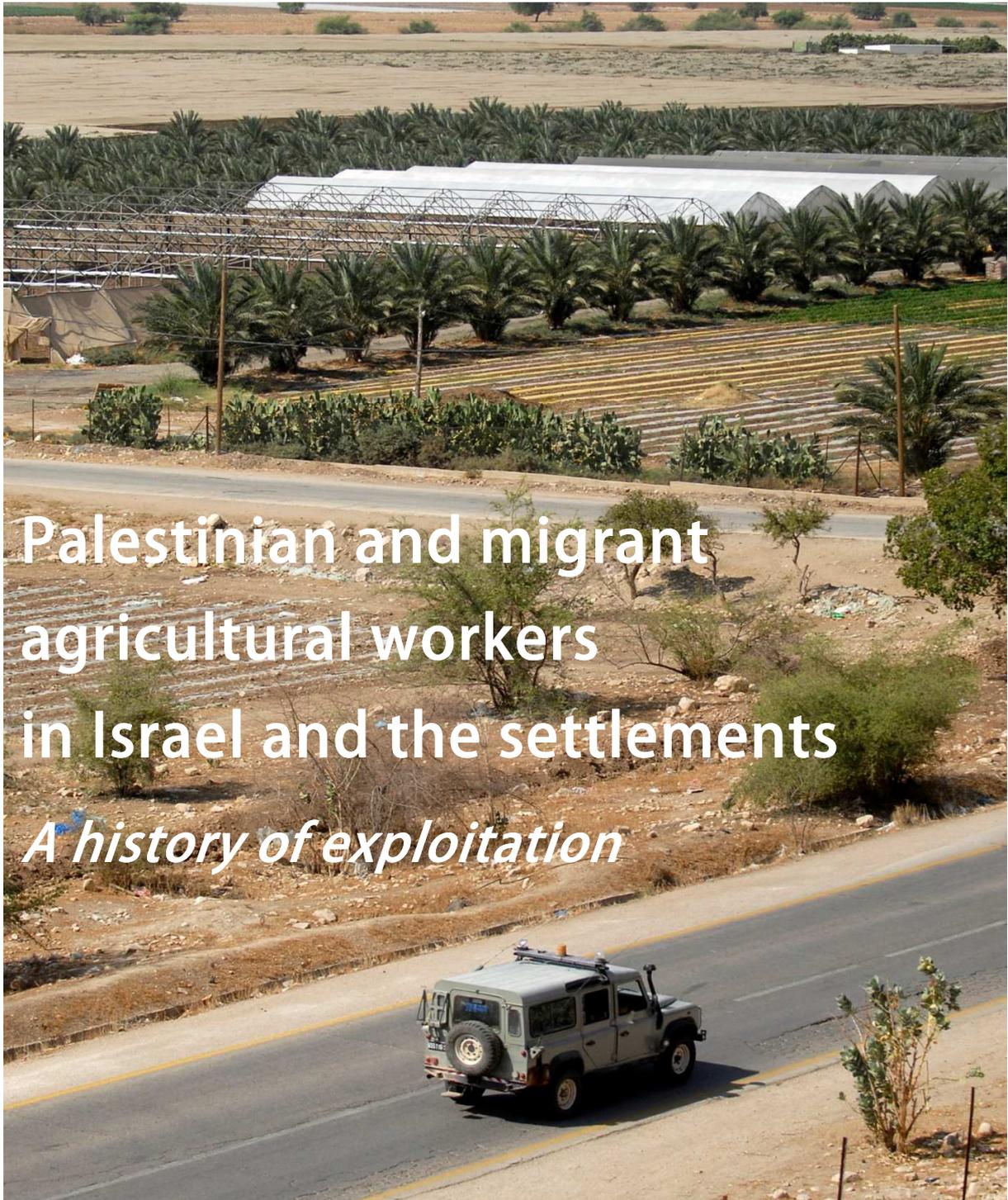




Confédération paysanne



UAWC
اتحاد لجان العمل الزراعي



Palestinian and migrant
agricultural workers
in Israel and the settlements
A history of exploitation

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Ouessale El Assimi, February 2014.

ABSTRACT

In the framework of the Via Campesina program about agricultural seasonal and migrant workers, a volunteer assignment was held in Palestine for 10 months. This mission was built and supported by Confédération Paysanne, Echanges & Partenariats and UAWC.

By meeting with farmers, farm workers, settlers and several institutional and civil society actors, we could obtain a brief overview of Palestinian agriculture and its workers. Palestinian agricultures, mostly peasant and familial, are losing ground to the difficulties related to the ongoing occupation and colonization. Palestinian peasants specifically suffer from restrictions to access to water, land, inputs, a labor force and endure draconian movement restrictions. These small agricultures, especially Bedouin pastoralism, are particularly affected by constant demolitions by the army and settler violence. Moreover, it is impossible for them to compete with Israeli and colonial farms.

All agricultural workers interviewed are originally farmers who can no longer cultivate their land or no longer support their families doing so. Whether they are Palestinian, Syrian of the Golan or Thai and whether they work in the '48 territories or in agricultural and industrial settlements, labor law is never respected and modern slavery is the rule. Although they are not all treated the same way and they experience different realities, they are all highly exploited, especially in terms of working hours, working conditions and exposure to health risks. They are caught in a system of order established on the weakening of workers: apartheid, martial law, inhuman immigration policies, dishonest intermediaries, child labor, ordinary racism....

Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority suffers from structural, political and financial problems and therefore has little room for improvement. However, all interlocutors denounce neoliberal agricultural and economic policies implemented in recent years, as they penalize agriculture and more specifically small and medium farmers. Various organizations are working on the subject and were able to obtain some victories, both through the law and strikes. However, the specificity of the sector and the political situation make this work long, difficult and even dangerous.

Finally, Palestinian agriculture and its peasants are bulwarks against the colonization of land, resources and minds because they are the backbone of the resistance, historically and physically. Although the destruction of these practices is a goal in itself for the colonizer, as well as some officials, the challenge of maintaining it is also that of maintaining a culture and identity of a whole people. The current negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel appear to have a bleak future, as Israel and its U.S. ally do not seem to be willing to respect international law. In this context, it is essential that civil society, specifically the workers and their organizations, take charge of the future of Palestine.

METHODOLOGY

1. Context of the study and organizations involved

This report was written within the framework of the "peasant agriculture and seasonal migrants" program of Via Campesina which is supported by its French member, Confédération paysanne. Confédération Paysanne is an anti-globalization French farmers' union, committed to the defense of peasant agriculture and the struggle against industrial agriculture and neoliberal economic policies. For over 10 years, Confédération paysanne has been working on the theme of migrants and seasonal agricultural workers, specifically by sending volunteers to different countries. The mission of the volunteers is first to seek information on the issue of seasonal and migrant workers and second, to create partnerships with farmers' unions and various other organizations to work on this issue over the long term.

The volunteer program was made possible through Echanges & Partenariats (*Exchanges & Partnerships*), an international NGO which aims to strengthen cooperation within civil society and to promote other forms of individual involvement in international solidarity projects. Concretely, Echanges & Partenariats serves as a bridge between organizations of different countries for sending volunteers with French and European funds, training them before departure and providing a framework for the promotion of their work once completed.

The partner organization for this 10-month mission was UAWC (Union of Agricultural Workers' Committees), which became a member of Via Campesina in June 2013. UAWC is a Palestinian agricultural development organization composed of local farmers' committees and engaged in the struggle against the Israeli occupation and the neoliberal policies that endanger Palestinian peasant agriculture. Beyond fundraising and implementation of agricultural development projects for the most affected farming communities, UAWC is sometimes forced to carry out humanitarian, political or union work, especially when it deals with the Palestinian Authority (PA). Finally, UAWC is engaged in the Palestinian and international network BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement and stands against "normalization" of the occupation.

This mission is the first one in Palestine in the framework of seasonal and migrant workers in agriculture. It is therefore an "exploratory mission" that aims to familiarize us with the specificities of the Palestinian issues and to provide an overview of the civil society organizations involved.

2. General methodology

This report is based on three different kinds of resources:

- Bibliographic resources,

- Field visits,
- Interviews with various relevant actors.

Bibliographic resources were initially about the general situation in Palestine: political organization in the region, statistics about demographics and basic development, the advancement of colonization, the agricultural sector in Israel and Palestine and other general economic data on Palestine. Then we focused on the issue of Jewish and non-Jewish migration to Israel and its impact on the structure of the labor market, on colonization and on the economic development of the region, particularly in the agricultural sector. Lastly, the final research was about the economic and social policies implemented by the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, with a focus on migration policies.

In parallel, we started the field visits. Assuming that it is in industrial agriculture that one can find large numbers of the labor force, we naturally headed towards the Israeli settlements, considering the fact that the vast majority of Palestinian agriculture is a traditional peasant agriculture, mainly familial. The purpose of these trips was also to be able to familiarize ourselves with the obstacles to Palestinian agriculture in general.

The field visits were organized so as to reach a representative view of the agricultural landscape in a context of great pedoclimatic, socio-economic and political diversity. To do this, we're grounded, among other things, in natural and administrative regions. The representativeness of the regions was defined according to the following criteria: predominantly agricultural regions, regions heavily affected by colonization, type of settlers and their impacts (like violence), area (B or C), available information on agricultural work, contacts available on the ground, production of agricultural settlements (more or less demanding of a labor force). These criteria allowed us to get a real picture of the issue in terms of geographic distribution and economic and social situation. In practice, this has resulted in visits to the peasants' and farm workers' workplaces and homes on the one hand and to various West Bank settlements on the other.

In addition, a three-day visit to the Golan Heights was also conducted in order to compare the situation in the territories and the occupied Syrian and Palestinian populations. Finally, given the political situation of the Bedouins and the African refugees and asylum seekers in Israel, we went to demonstrations taking place in Israel several times.

Various types of interviews were conducted primarily among peasants, agricultural workers and settlers, civil society (NGOs, associations, trade unions...), institutional actors (authorities and international organizations), researchers.... Some actors were contacted at the beginning of the mission, and others became relevant later. Most of the time, farmers and farm workers were contacted via UAWC and the interviews were directed with the presence and assistance of a member of UAWC staff, specifically for the translation. This also allowed us to immediately create a relationship of trust with the farmers, given the personal relationships that UAWC employees maintain with them.

For other meetings, contacts were either made by the volunteer or UAWC, for practical reasons. Only interviews with settlers were a bit uncertain, insofar as the interviews depended on their presence in the settlement at the time of the visits. In addition, unlike with the other actors, we did not have

individual contacts in the settlements, where we were also never certain to be allowed to enter. Finally, for security reasons and in order to continue the study, it was impossible to reveal the purpose of our visits to the settlers, which made it difficult to gather information.

3. Interview methodology

The interviews were semi-directed. Questionnaires were prepared before the beginning of the mission for three different types of actors (agricultural workers, land owners/managers of farms and institutions and NGOs) and served as a guideline. Not of them were used given the particularities of the Palestinian case.

With peasants, the first objective was to give them a platform to explain their condition and collect their views on the different types of actors in their environment and ways of improving the situation. Therefore, we could question different types of land laborers, distinct by type of work and geographical criteria, such as farmers working solely in West Bank settlements (or the Golan), Palestinian labor intermediaries, Palestinian farmers working inside Israel, Palestinian farmers working in both their land and in settlements, peasants working solely on their land or on collective Palestinian land, Thai migrant workers in the settlements, Palestinian seasonal workers or full-time employees.... Total, about thirty workers were interviewed.

For NGOs and institutions, we wanted instead to determine the scope of their activities (political, unionist, institutional, developmental, research...) and to identify their level of expertise, mainly on agriculture and work-related issues. The second objective of these interviews was to identify the role and impact of these actors on the situation of land laborers. Finally, we always kept in the back of our minds our intention to identify those with whom it would be possible to build a partnership to continue to work on this topic with Via Campesina.

These interviews, conducted in English or Arabic, were almost all fully recorded and transcribed, mostly in English. Their duration ranged from several minutes to several hours depending on the time available and the responsiveness of the people interviewed.

4. Advantages of this methodology

At the relational level, contact was generally very positive with land laborers, visibly happy to share their experiences and reflections. The freedom of the interviews also allowed the farmers to address issues at the margins of the main theme but equally important to understand the context. The ability to enter the settlements and speak with settlers also allowed us to understand their vision of the situation and compare their living conditions with that of the Palestinians. Moreover, this aspect of the study allowed us to have a good overview of the diversity of settlers and settlements located in the West Bank, as well as of their impact on Palestinian farmers.

On the other hand, the impressive dynamism of Palestinian civil society and the importance of the issue of land and agriculture in Palestinian society and culture was an asset to having different approaches to this crosscutting theme. Networks are deeply entrenched. Particularly in agriculture, they are operational and cover the whole territory. In addition, historically, farmers' organizations are the backbone of the resistance, which opened perspectives to networking.

5. Obstacles and limits of the study

The first obstacle was the language. Although it was possible to understand Palestinians, especially with the help of UAWC staff, the language barrier limited the opportunities for exchange with Thai workers and, to a lesser extent, with settlers. Fluency in Hebrew would have been a great help, both in literature searches and talks with Thai migrants and settlers.

On the other hand, despite the allocation of 1000 USD to UAWC for this study, the available budget limited movement on the ground, which requires a rental car with an Israeli plate. Furthermore, it was necessary to take caution when entering areas forbidden to Palestinians (specifically settlements) with our UAWC partners, for their own safety. Additionally, being a woman was sometimes difficult to handle in personal relationships with some male counterparts. Carrying out this mission with tourist visas of three months implies an obligation to get in and out of Israeli territory for renewal, without being certain of being allowed in again. Finally, although some aspects of the topic have been dug into, others would require a real collaboration with the Palestinian and Israeli authorities to obtain updated quantitative information.

Furthermore, concerning the settlers, even though most of them were welcoming and proud to show off "their" lands, houses and activities, it has not been possible to dig more into their role vis-à-vis this subject and receive their testimony on the issue. Indeed, first, to enter the settlements, it was necessary to play dumb by disguising our identity: we were sometimes tourists, sometimes agriculture students from a random American university. If this technique usually allowed us to converse with the settlers, it was more difficult to justify asking precise questions on activities and labor because the settlers are rather suspicious towards visitors, especially non-Jews (not to mention the language barrier with some of them). In fact, for our own safety and to not endanger the rest of the mission, the priority remained to not seem "suspicious." To get more accurate information, it would have been necessary to form a long-term relationship with a settler-farmer, which would have involved more trips.

More broadly, it was always difficult to introduce ourselves to the people we met, given that the topic of the study touches on fundamental questions and passionate debates in which every word counts and reveals a personal opinion.

6. Conclusion

This report is not intended to be exhaustive, but to reflect the results of the investigative work of the volunteer in the allotted time. Although it also relies on institutional bibliographic data, it is the field observations and the word of people interviewed on the ground that are highlighted. This report is not intended to present a classic scientific work, not for lack of rigor, but because of a desire to increase the human and disciplinary approaches. Thus, the personal opinions of the interviewees and the author are considered to be as important as the precise numbers and statistics.

We want to offer a current and comprehensive picture of the overall situation of farmers and agriculture in the West Bank, as well as of Palestinian agricultural workers, whether they work in the West Bank or in Israel. In addition, we aim to identify the main factors responsible for this complex situation to try to detect methods for improvement in a difficult context.

The interviews will be published anonymously because not all parties have given their consent, as well as for security reasons. The information and analysis gathered from the interviews will therefore appear as footnotes under two categories: "peasants" for farmers and workers, and "actors" for NGOs and institutions.

To conclude, this analysis of the situation is not intended to be politically neutral but has the aim of defending peasant agriculture and its workers. Points of view developed and conclusions drawn from it are solely those of the author and not - or at least not only - those of the individual partners or partner organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, land artificialisation and development of industrial agriculture expose the many facets of their offences. They deprive the peasants of their means of production (land, water, seeds...), of the possibility of earning a decent income from their work and enslave them, when they don't force them to flee their rural areas for metropolitan peripheral slums, or even flee their country in the hope of a better life.

We now know the environmental and sanitary consequences of industrial agriculture: destruction of water resources, soil, wild and cultivated biodiversity, pollution, impact on the population's health.... But the economic and social consequences are less studied. Poverty is ravaging the agricultural and rural world in a global context where resource-grabbing is the rule. The number of farms and the diversity of their production decreases, crushed under the domination of globalized agriculture that produces large industrial monocultural facilities. Moreover, the orientation toward exportation of these agro-industrial plants doesn't feed the rural population, who are becoming the most affected by food insecurity and misery in general.

In this context, peasants are deprived of the opportunity to cultivate their lands and often find themselves forced to become laborers in intensive, workforce-hungry industrial facilities, in their country of origin or elsewhere. They are thus extremely vulnerable and dependent as it is often the only alternative to meet the needs of families. Everywhere, these modern slaves work in inhumane conditions without rights for an income barely enabling them to survive. Thus, land laborers are the target of the combination of agricultural, economic and migration policies that organize human trafficking.

Furthermore, the act of targeting the agriculture of a people by all means is denying the social, economic and cultural rights of the people. The forced standardization of agriculture worldwide is a key factor in the process of acculturation, assimilation and the weakening of entire populations. Indeed, language, food habits, traditional festivals (often associated with seasons) and social structures (familial, communal and political) are profoundly modified. These changes imposed by economic or military violence are profound insofar as they directly affect the very identity of individuals and communities.

If these trends are a reality for the world's farmers, they are even more blatant and aggressive in occupied Palestine. The removal of traditional agriculture is a goal in itself for the colonizer, not only aiming to make the Palestinians dependent on Israel for food and money, but also to destroy the peasantry, the backbone of the Palestinian resistance. More pragmatically, evicting Palestinian farmers is convenient to get rid of bulky physical obstacles to the pursuit of the implantation of Jewish settlements and the ethnic cleansing of the "Holy Land."

In Palestine, the issue of the defense of peasant agriculture is not only one of refusing industrial agriculture and its economic and social model, but maintaining the know-how, culture and land of a people who don't have it, and therefore maintaining the identity of the Palestinian people. Maintaining

the Palestinian peasant agriculture is not only to oppose colonization physically, but also symbolically and concretely affirm Palestinian identity as a living, dignified and independent people destined to perpetuate itself.

However, through this small contribution, we hope to show the particular situation of agriculture in this piece of Palestine that is the West Bank and to illuminate the difficulties and the courage of these laborers who practice it and of those who support them.

PART 1:

GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Israel: an ongoing colonial project

1.1. Israel, a colonial project stemming from Zionism



It is important to note that colonization by the establishment of Jewish homes standing outside the borders of 1967, or the "Green Line" (Israel's borders recognized by the international community) is the result of a strong political will to build "Greater Israel", a pillar concept of Zionist ideology. Zionism, theorized by Theodore Herzl, is a nationalist political ideology that emerged in the late nineteenth century and aimed to establish a state by and for Jews. The emergence of this ideology is contemporary to other nationalisms in

a world still massively colonized, and in the Jewish case, reflects the reality of pogroms against Ashkenazi Jews¹ in Central and Western Europe. However, particularly in Europe, Jewish leftist movements such as the Bund² in Germany, supporters of the workers' International, strongly opposed Zionism without success.

Briefly, Zionism, which takes its name from Mount Zion, the biblical name of the hill on which Jerusalem was built, set its sights on Ottoman Palestine and then on Mandatory Palestine³. Even though

¹ Ashkenazi Jews: from the Hebrew « Ashkenaz », one of Noah's great-grandsons, it refers to Central and Eastern European Jews. Their original language is Yiddish.

² Bund: It was the General Union of Jewish workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. It was a Jewish socialist movement created in the late XIXth century in the Russian Empire. It was clearly engaged in the struggle for socialism and fought czarism as much as Zionism and Bolshevism. It was secular without being atheist, opposed reactionary traditionalist practices like patriarchy while defending the Jewish culture, specifically through its language, Yiddish. Adding together the defects of being socialists and Jews, its militants were massacred during the Second World War and the movement did not survive.

³ After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire (which encompassed Palestine) by the British during the First World War, the allies cut up the Middle East and shared the newly created territories. In 1922, Palestine was placed under the British

other countries, notably Uganda, were discussed by the colonial powers and the Zionist movement, the opportunities offered by colonial wars reaffirmed the choice of Palestine for obvious geostrategic and religious reasons. It is important to keep in mind that since it is based on Zionist ideology, Israel is not a finished state so to speak, but a colonial project. Israel is the only country in the world that has not clearly defined its borders and its current physical boundaries are not recognized by the international community⁴. (See map below).

1.2. What is a settlement?

The term settlement means a city or a village constituted of Jewish Israeli civilians located outside the borders of Israel and protected by Israeli soldiers. Today, there are Israeli settlements in the West Bank (occupied Palestine) and the Golan Heights (occupied Syria). It is important to remember that all these settlements constitute a violation of international law and have been the subject of many specific UN resolutions⁵.



¹ The Halamish settlement, implanted on Nabi Saleh village lands, near Ramallah - Andrew Beale - 08/2013

The settlements are easily recognizable in the landscape of the West Bank. Planned cities consisting of massive blocks of identical houses often topped with red tile roofs are characteristic of the settlements. In addition to disfiguring the landscape, they contrast sharply with the architecture of Palestinian towns and villages, old and new. The implantation of settlements on hilltops and their architecture, reminiscent of gated communities in the United States, clearly mark

the economic and social segregation of populations. Indeed, without even knowing that it is Israeli citizens' settlements on Palestinian land, it is first the contrast between the lush gardens and blazing new houses in the settlements on the one hand, and Palestinian villages or the makeshift tents of Bedouin on the other, that strikes one. A fortiori in area C, in which the Palestinian populations are very poor, dual ethnic and economic segregation is ostentatious.

Mandate. From the outset, the British promised to earmark Palestine West of the Jordan River to host a "National Jewish home."

⁴ The UN recognizes the '67 borders, or "green line", defined by the Partition Plan of Palestine.

⁵ In addition to International Law, the UN issued 34 resolutions specifically about Israeli violations in Palestine (and 70 if we count all the resolutions regarding Israeli violations in the Middle East).

The first settlements, strictly speaking, were established following the Six Days' War that took place in June 1967. Israel, the victor, occupied the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula (hitherto Egyptian territories), the Syrian Golan Heights and the West Bank and East Jerusalem, under Jordanian administration. The last settlements present in Gaza were dismantled in 2005 and the small strip of land is now under blockade, surrounded by a concrete wall and miles of "buffer zone." The Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt in exchange for a peace treaty in September 1975. Today, Israel still militarily occupies the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, with different regimes of administration and different restrictions.

Israeli colonization accelerated in the mid-70's under the leadership of the Israeli government, particularly the Likud (an Israeli right-wing party) and religious parties. Similarly, several Jewish organizations got actively involved in this mission, among them the Jewish National Fund⁶, the Gush Emunim⁷, and the Elad⁸ Association in East Jerusalem.

1.3. How are the settlements located?⁹

The settlements are not located at random. First, the choice of hilltops and not valleys is a military strategy, allowing the army and settlers to dominate the Palestinian villages below. On the other hand, even if the settlements are widely distributed throughout the country, it is very clear that the settlements are located on sparsely populated yet strategic territories.

Apart from religious reasons explaining why some areas are more affected than others, settlements are real tools for disconnecting and separating Palestinian towns and villages. Those in the East not only form a border with Jordan, but also enjoy the fertile lands of the Jordan Valley and the water of the river and the Eastern Aquifer. Those of the West form a sort of buffer zone along the 1967 borders, cutting the West Bank off from Jerusalem and constituting a de-facto expansion of Israel's territory. Others mark

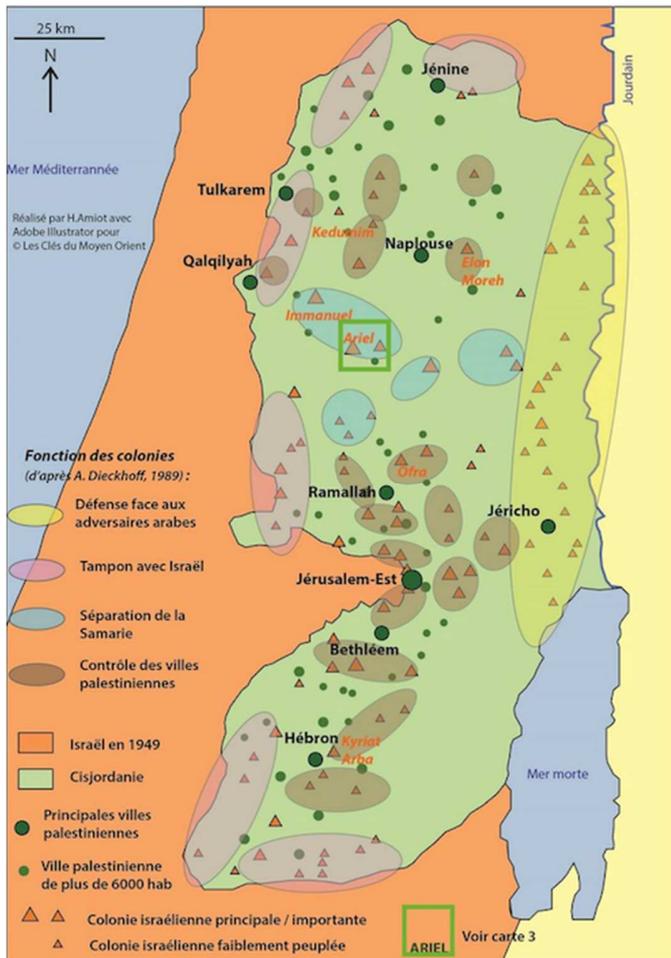
⁶ Jewish National Fund, or KKL for "Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael", is a fund that owns and administers several hundred thousand hectares in Israel. It was founded in 1901 and is the central architect of the Zionist movement insofar as it decided to buy massive amounts of land in Palestine to prepare for the installation of the first settlers. In 1948, it controlled and rented the Palestinian refugees' "abandoned lands" to settlers. It is organized into committees present in 50 countries and got intensively involved in reforestation of Palestinian villages with pine and cypress, to prevent return and erase traces of their presence. Even though the JNF claims to fight against desertification and erosion, its destruction of preexisting fruit trees allows for doubt of the environmentalist intentions of the Zionist movement.

⁷ Gush Emunim, from the Hebrew for "Faithful Bloc," is a religious organization created to Judaize "Judea and Samaria" (the respective biblical names of the Southern and Northern West Bank) by settling there. Clandestine since 1967, it was officialized in 1974. The organization per se has now disappeared, though its influence remains important within religious political parties.

⁸ Elad, from the Hebrew "To the City of David" (also known as the "Ir David Foundation") is an Israeli Zionist colonial organization based in Jerusalem. It employs every means to achieve the Judaization of what it considers to be the location of the temple of David: excavation without permission that caused the collapse of part of the district of Silwan, destruction and falsification of archaeological discoveries, appropriation of Jerusalem's historical sites for purposes of tourist propaganda, permanent harassment of the Palestinian people to force them to leave their homes, armed evictions of Palestinians and a recorded murder attempt by the organization's President against Palestinian children in 2010.

⁹ Peace Now: publications and interview, 2013.

the separation between Judea and Samaria (names used by Israel to refer respectively to the South and North of the West Bank), especially between the cities of Nablus and Ramallah. Finally, the remaining settlements encircle the largest Palestinian cities specifically to prevent them from expanding¹⁰. (See map below).



A settlement can be implanted in several ways. The legal procedure (under Israeli law) is for manufacturers (which may be associations or private companies) to apply for a building permit to the Israeli government, which it is free to accept or refuse.

On the other hand, certain individuals or Israeli organizations dispense with this authorization and choose to go build houses or install caravans in the occupied territories. These settlements are called "outposts." These extremist settlers are thus in violation of Israeli law itself and act for religious reasons ("the Land of Israel belongs to the Jews") or ideological reasons ("the Arabs plundered land from Jews").

Anyway, these settlements are always located close to towns and villages inhabited by indigenous populations (Palestinian and Syrian) and the PA and the local populations are never consulted.

In fact, if the settlement is authorized and planned by the Israeli government, it gives them great support in various forms. First, there is military support by assigning soldiers to the settlement permanently. In terms of infrastructure, the houses are sold at low prices, building materials are cheaper or even free, and settlements are immediately provided with water and electricity at much lower prices than in Israel. The government also provides schools, health service and roads reserved for settlers and prohibited to Palestinians by numerous checkpoints. The State also provides public transportation linking settlements to each other and to Israel at below the public transportation prices inside Israel. In addition, settlers enjoy some advantages such as the ease of getting a permit to carry a weapon or tax exemption on a number of economic activities conducted in the settlements.

¹⁰ Les colonies israéliennes en territoire occupé. Hervé Amiot, *Les Clés du Moyen Orient*, 02/10/2013.

Although outposts do not benefit from these services, the Israeli government has shown a certain laxity towards them and rarely intervenes to dislodge extremist settlers. When they do, the settlers come back as many times as it takes to rebuild because they are never prosecuted for it. Finally, in practice, the vast majority of outposts are legalized by the government within months or years after their construction and eventually benefit from the same services. This is especially true and happens quickly when the outpost is the extension of an existing settlement.

1.4. Who are the settlers?¹¹

The settlers are not a homogeneous population, just like the Israeli population. Four major types of settlers can be identified: religious, ideologues, investors or businessmen, and lower-income families.

The religious settlers move into existing settlements or initiate them for several reasons. This may be because a place is mentioned in the Bible, as is the case around the areas of Nablus or Hebron. They can also be small conservative Jewish sects whose ideology prescribes them to live in a closed circle, away from temptations, or in an autarkic way of life. Some ideologue settlers aspire to have a way of life similar to that of "pioneers," the very poor Ashkenazi Jews who settled in Palestine in the late nineteenth century, creating almost autarkic farming communities called "kibbutz."

Ideologue settlers also firmly believe that the land belongs to Jews and was robbed from them by the Arabs, whom they hate and fear at the same time and want to see disappear from their landscape. These two categories of settlers can often be combined and they are the ones who show the greatest violence against Arab populations. If these are not necessarily the most numerous, they are undoubtedly the most radical and influential on the Israeli government. The majority of them are immigrants from Eastern Europe, the United States and France.

Moreover, economic and tax advantages benefitting the settlements attract many investors and entrepreneurs. Thus, Israeli companies flourish in the settlements. Along with industry, agriculture is probably the most represented sector, especially in the Jordan Valley: bank loans are easy to get and cheap, the water is almost free, all agricultural inputs are subsidized and the dependent and inexpensive Arab labor force is available in abundance. It is the same for industrial activities, especially in the areas of Salfit and Tulkarem. In addition, the location of these activities outside of Israel allows them to free themselves from many regulations, particularly Israeli labor law and environmental law. Finally, these settlers often describe themselves as do-gooders or even humanitarian actors who develop the occupied territories by providing work for the poorest Palestinians.

Additionally, many low-income families come to settle in the settlements, to benefit from the advantages mentioned above. They are found mainly in the settlements surrounding Jerusalem, or in the agglomeration settlements like Ariel, near Salfit. In settlements around Jerusalem, it is not

¹¹ Ibid. Residence authorization in the settlements is left to the discretion of the settlement's local council, so it is very difficult for Arabs to get homes there.

uncommon to find '48 Palestinian¹² residents. It is also common for this type of settlers to not even be aware of living in a settlement – that is to say, of living outside the Green Line. Indeed, the network of settlers' roads is built to allow circulation from Israel to the West Bank without even noticing. Moreover, their number has increased in recent years due to the increase of housing prices in Israel, caused by the state cessation of price regulation.

To conclude, it is important to keep in mind that settlers represent only 4% of the total Israeli population and their media omnipresence, their financial cost to the state and the image they show off of Israel worldwide create strong controversies within Israeli society while nevertheless generating massive opposition movements.

2. Occupied territories: between military occupation and a powerless Palestinian authority

2.1. Administration of the West Bank: Who governs what and since when?¹³

The issue of land and population administration is complex because in the context of occupation, several powers overlap and neutralize each other and there is also what we could call a legal vacuum. The historical frame seems to be the most relevant to understanding the administrative organization of the West Bank.

First, since 1967 and the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli government established a military administration over the occupied territories, in charge of ruling all of the occupied territories using military orders, many of which are still law today in the West Bank. It is important to remember that at the time there were no settlers in the West Bank. These military orders (over 2,500 since 1967, more than one a week) govern all the most unlikely aspects of Palestinians' daily lives. Not surprisingly, the earliest ones regulate ownership of land and water, banks and approvals for the creation of enterprises. There are also military orders concerning politics such as orders banning gatherings of more than 10 people, the censorship of the Palestinian press, and a list of prohibited publications, including UN resolutions on Palestine.... Others directly affect the daily lives of the people, such as the prohibition on transporting goods by donkey and the limitation of species and number of decorative plants in Palestinian properties. Although many of them have been repealed or fallen into

¹² '48 Palestinians are Palestinians who remained or returned in the '48 territories after the Nakba. As it couldn't afford to eradicate these hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the Zionist state offered them a second-class Israeli citizenship. This expression also includes Palestinians of Jerusalem who only have a residence permit and are therefore stateless.

¹³ *Israël, Un Etat d'apartheid ? Enjeux juridiques et politiques*. Cécile Lebrun and Julien Salingue. L'Harmattan, february 2013.

oblivion since then, the most strategically important (land, water, economy...) persist and have been refined.

Today, the military administration controlling the West Bank is cynically called the "civil administration" and is still a body of the Israeli army. Similarly, to enforce these laws proclaimed in 1967, the Israeli government set up military courts that have jurisdiction over all civil cases in the occupied territories. This is another violation of international law in itself. These courts reserve the right not to publish charges and evidence, and it's up to the defendant to prove his innocence. The prosecutors can also imprison the defendants without trial for periods of six months, renewable indefinitely, without charges (this is the "administrative detention"). These courts are still functioning and work the same way, but the situation on the ground has changed.

The first settlements were established in 1968 in the Hebron area and they multiplied continuously in phases. Therefore, a problem arose: in the same territory, there was no longer a single population, but two. The settlers are Israeli citizens residing in territories that are not considered an integral part of Israel. Indeed, the West Bank and Gaza were never officially annexed and incorporated into Israel (except Jerusalem) for obvious demographic and political reasons: the population of the State wanted it to be Jewish and white, but with annexation it would become predominantly Arab and non-Jewish, which does not fit with the Zionist ideology. In addition, it would have to give the same rights and services to all citizens (more than a million Palestinians in '67 and more than 3 million today), which would be expensive and would deprive the occupier of many benefits, particularly economic ones. Obviously, it is not conceivable for the Zionist state to administer the settlements with the same laws that apply to Palestinians without discouraging potential colonizers. Therefore, a parallel legislation was created.

At the local and regional level, the settlements have their own regional municipalities and administrative entities grouping several settlements and called "regional councils." Since the early 80s, military orders give the possibility to the military command to enable the settlement authorities to apply several dozen Israeli laws. So until today, the civil administration acts as an interface between the Israeli legislation and the settlement authorities. Similarly, local and rabbinical courts exist in the colonies and take care of litigation between settlers. If a settler is deemed guilty of an infraction outside the settlement and within the occupied territories, he is judged by a civil court in Israel, like any other Israeli citizen living in Israel. In addition, settlements actually benefit from services of the Israeli state that Palestinians do not have access to, such as education, health and agriculture subsidies.

2.2. The Oslo Accords¹⁴

In 1993 the Oslo Accords were signed between PLO¹⁵ leader Yasser Arafat and Israel's president Shimon Peres under the auspices of American president Bill Clinton. The Oslo Accords are a clear

¹⁴ Oslo Accords: integral published document. Field observations.

¹⁵ PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization. Political organization founded in 1964 comprised of three major parties: Fatah, PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and DFLP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Until the

surrender of the Palestinian resistance, which, needing recognition and international legitimatization for the leader and his party, accepted the oppressive and discriminatory principles imposed by the occupier. Indeed, the Oslo Accords specifically created the PA, which strengthened the power of the PLO and aimed to become the Palestinian state institution. The question of the creation of a Palestinian state encompassing the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, was relegated to future negotiations (which have not yet concluded 20 years later). The PA theoretically has independent institutions (parliament, judiciary system and army) and has jurisdiction over the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza. Finally, since 2006, following the refusal of both the international community and Fatah¹⁶ to recognize Hamas¹⁷ victory in the elections in Gaza, the Parliament was dissolved and the Palestinian unity government was split into two: Hamas in Gaza and Fatah, embodied by the PA in the West Bank.



On the other hand, the Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into non-contiguous areas (areas A, B and C) administered under different regimes. (See map below¹⁸). Area A represents 2% of the territory and is theoretically under full Palestinian control. It includes most of the Palestinian cities, with the exception of East Jerusalem, excluded from the agreements. Area B represents 26% of the territory and is under Palestinian civil control but Israeli military control. It includes the vast majority of the 450 villages of the West Bank. Area C represents 72% of the territory and is fully under Israeli control. This is the least populated area, where there are scattered villages of poor peasants and Bedouins. Palestinian construction of all types is prohibited and it is in this area that the settlements flourish. Overall, almost all agricultural land is in area C. This zoning is still in effect and in fact, the Israeli army violates the restrictions imposed on it constantly.

The PA is headquartered in Ramallah since Jerusalem, claimed as the capital of a potential Palestinian state, is subject

Oslo Accords, it was considered by Israel as a terrorist organization. It is now internationally recognized as the Palestinian partner of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations "for the resolution of the conflict."

¹⁶ Fatah is a reverse acronym for "Palestinian National Liberation Movement" in Arabic. It was created by Yasser Arafat in Kuwait in 1959 and is now led by Mahmoud Abbas, also President of the PA. Today, Fatah can be described as center-right and because of its recognition of Israel and its advocacy for a separate Palestinian state, other parties often criticize its complicity with the Israeli authorities.

¹⁷ Hamas: "Fervor" in Arabic or "Islamic Resistance Movement," was created in 1967 by former members of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is defined by its negation of the State of Israel it calls "the Zionist entity" and its claim over the whole Historical Palestine (West Bank, Gaza and Israel today). It rejects the Oslo Accords and considers armed struggle as legitimate and necessary to release the Palestinian people. It is clearly opposed to Fatah who refused Hamas a national unity government after their victory in the 2006 elections. Thus, Hamas is today a government in the Gaza Strip, although it remains dependent, especially financially, on the PA. Several countries (including the EU and the USA) consider Hamas a terrorist organization, while South Africa, Russia, Norway and Brazil do not.

¹⁸ <http://reenefrompalestine.wordpress.com/> Accessed on 10/02/2014.

to de-facto annexation and cut off from the West Bank by the apartheid wall¹⁹. In the West Bank, communities elect local and regional councilors (often farmers), who are responsible for their relationship with the authorities of the governorate. What is left of Palestine is administratively divided into these governorates: 11 in the West Bank and 5 in Gaza. In fact, given the political situation (occupation on the one hand and dependence on international funding on the other), the regional authorities have a very low rate of financial and political action²⁰.

2.3. To review

Today, settlers and settlements are under the control of their own regional governments that implement the main civil Israeli laws for civil cases and benefit from the services of the army. The PA has no jurisdiction over civilian or military Israeli citizens, even in the case of litigation involving a Palestinian or occurring in an area under Palestinian authority. As for the Palestinians, they are under the PA's control for civil cases when residing in areas A and B, but not in area C. Finally, the inhabitants of areas B and C are under Israeli military control. So the inhabitants of area C receive no services. To conclude, the occupying force remains in tight control of the West Bank, militarily and physically as well as economically and socially through the framework of economic dependence of the occupied territories on Israel and the impact of settlements on the ground.

2.4. The PA: structurally, financially and politically dependent

Again, the first explanation for the institutional and political dysfunctions remains the ongoing military occupation and colonization of Palestinian territories. However, Palestine faces its own structural problems.

In fact, Palestine receives one of the highest levels of direct international financial support in the world with a total of 1.1 billion dollars in 2005. The other sources of income for the PA are taxes and duties. The main donors are the European Union, the USA, Arab countries, then Norway and Japan²¹.

¹⁹ Apartheid Wall: Israel calls it the "separation wall" or "security fence." Its construction began in 2002, officially to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian terrorist attacks. 700 km long, it sinks beyond the Green Line and literally encircles Palestinian towns like Qalqilya and Tulkarem, confiscates hundreds of thousands of hectares of land, while encompassing settlement blocs. It also cuts East Jerusalem off from the West Bank. It is quasi-unanimously denounced worldwide and was the subject of several UN resolutions.

²⁰ Interviews with actors 2013, 2014.

²¹ Palestinian Ministry of Finance (Website).

However, international aid is not unconditional: the example of the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections, followed by an immediate blockade of U.S. aid, is an obvious one. Similarly, with Israel controlling the borders, the money from customs duties is regularly retained by the Zionist state, causing various problems like the non-payment of public employees' salaries for several months²².



2 Palestinian soldier in front of the Moqata'a, headquarters of the PA, Ramallah - Gillaume de Crop - 10/2012

In addition, the Israeli occupation has the reputation of being the least expensive in history, insofar as it imposes occupation duties to the PA. The fact that more than a third of public employees are military or police – basically responsible for ensuring the security of Israel – is also a clear proof. Palestine has one security agent for every 30 inhabitants against 1 for 735 in France. This is the highest number of military and police per capita in the world after North Korea and Algeria. Moreover, refugee camps are fully administered by the UN.

On the other hand, Palestinian public money directly benefits the Israeli public and private sectors²³. For example, the allocation granted to Palestinian political prisoners directly funds the semi-privatized Israeli military prisons (prisoners must pay for their own food and water.)²⁴ This money also indirectly benefits Israel: it is generally said that the creation of one job in Palestine generates the creation of four jobs in Israel, especially since the war industry is incredibly lucrative²⁵.

These considerations are equally relevant when considering the money allocated to NGOs, which may have more political room to maneuver internally and clearly compensate for the political and economic weakness of the PA. They have to work with "conditional" funds, which in order to "promote peace" impose predetermined development projects that benefit both Palestinians and Israelis. Concretely, in the case of agricultural projects, this often results in forcing Palestinian farmers to grow export crops (dates for instance) and the products are exported via a colonial packaging house and exporter.

²² Benita Ferrero-Waldner, spokeswoman for the Commissioner for External Relations of the EU quoted by Le Figaro, 15/10/2007: EU direct budgetary aid to only pays for "10% of the salary expenditure of the Palestinian Authority." Customs duties that Israel refuses to reimburse to the Palestinians amounted to more than \$ 50 million per month and "the financial crisis is caused primarily by the continuing conflict and restrictions on Palestinians' movements" imposed by Israel.

²³ Julien Salingue – *l'économie de la Palestine : acheter la paix ?* 10/11/2012. Université populaire : *Quel avenir pour la Palestine. Institut de Recherche et d'Etudes Méditerranée & Moyen-Orient (IREMMO).*

²⁴ Addameer, interview 2013.

²⁵ Julien Salingue – *l'économie de la Palestine : acheter la paix ?*

In addition, an astronomical amount of international money released for humanitarian or development missions ends up in ruins under the bulldozers of the Israeli army. The European Commission, as the main donor and despite numerous complaints on the occasion of the destruction of the projects they finance with European taxpayers' money, has never bothered to respond²⁶. Indeed, international donors, especially Europe and the United States, are actively collaborating with Israel through direct financing, military support and trade agreements²⁷.

To conclude, the international money is a poisoned gift that serves far more to maintain Israel by making the Palestinians dependent on aid money and trying to buy a semblance of economic and social peace, rather than really improving the situation in Palestine. This system is basically temporarily building with one hand and permanently maintaining the source of the problem with the other.

²⁶ Interviews with actors 2013, 2014.

²⁷ Between 2001 and 2005, the USA sold more than 6.323 billion dollars of weapons according to the *Facts Book: Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency*, 30/09/2005. Between 2001 and 2007, the USA offered Israel 19.509 billion dollars of subsidies related to defense and arms, according to the *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations* for 2001-2007. The European Union has signed no less than 18 bilateral trade agreements with Israel and the constantly increasing trade amounted to €21.36 billion in 2004. In addition, during his last visit to Israel in November 2013, François Hollande, French President, recalled the "*unwavering support of France*" to Israel, which, according to him never "*sold out democracy, pluralism and human rights.*"

PART 2:

OVERVIEW OF AGRICULTURE IN THE WEST BANK

1. The Palestinian agricultures: diversified and peasant

1.1. Cultivated surfaces, dominant productions and their evolution

Throughout the West Bank, there are about 93,150 hectares of cultivated land, 60% less than in 2000. Throughout Palestine, the permanently cultivated surface per capita decreased from 408 to 156 m² over the last 10 years. This is mainly due to population growth (around 4% per year) and the decline in agricultural production.

Today, 70% of cultivated land is cultivated permanently and the West Bank still has an additional 46,700 hectares of suitable agricultural land. Only 15% of the cultivated land is irrigated²⁸. Indeed, if 30% of lands are cultivated temporarily, it is mainly because of the lack of access to water and of the variations of the agricultural population which makes the level of production fluctuate along with unemployment.



3 Peasant family in Janya at the end of a day of harvesting olives - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

²⁸ PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics). Interviews with actors 2013. LRC: *Land Suitability and Development in the West Bank*, April 2010.

63.7% of the land is cultivated with fruit trees, 86% of which are olive trees and then dates, citrus, bananas and other fruits. 23.7% of the land is sown with field crops (wheat and barley) and 12% with vegetables (potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, chili, eggplant, zucchini...). Regarding livestock, sheep dominate (732,400 head), then come goats, cattle and finally broilers, layers and turkeys. There are also 44,000 beehives in the West Bank. Over the last 20 years production has somewhat fluctuated but remains slightly higher for all products except for vegetable production, which has fallen sharply, and egg production, which has multiplied by 10.

1.2. Regional disparities²⁹



4 Flock of sheep grazing on crop residues near Bethlehem - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

The major West Bank cities, in terms of urbanized area and population, are Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah and Jerusalem. In agriculture, the most productive regions, whether due to soil depth, presence of groundwater or specialization, are those of Jericho, Tubas, Salfit, Jenin, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, Tulkarem and Nablus. Not surprisingly, these are the areas where the agricultural sector dominates in terms of income, employment and culture. No surprise either — they are the most vulnerable areas to land and water grabbing, and to settlement development.

These are also areas that are labor-force reservoirs for the Israeli agricultural settlements or for Israeli border territories, indicating not only the pressure of colonization, but also the increased dependence of these populations on the agricultural sector. This is particularly clear in the Northwest and the Jericho area.

Fruit and vegetables are produced mainly in the north, the west and around Jericho. Olive trees are everywhere, except in the Jericho area. Larger agricultural fields are in the North and the West, around the cities of Jenin, Hebron and Nablus. Although they are found basically everywhere, most grazing areas are around Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho and Ramallah.

Some specificities are important to notice. The inhabitants of Hebron, whether rural or urban, are those who suffer the most from settlers' violence because of the predominance of religious and ideological settlers. In the Jericho area lay the largest settlements, which are specifically agricultural

²⁹ Ibid. Field observations.



5 Grapes wrapped in paper bags on the vine to protect them from birds - Andrew Beale - 10/2013

settlements, and farmers in the region are the most exposed to army demolitions. The main cultures are dates, grapes, other fruits and vegetables which require a large amount of cheap labor.

On the other hand, the Bethlehem and Hebron regions are known for the production of grapes for wine (Cremisan and Aboud), table grapes and Taybeh beer. Finally, the north (Jenin and Nablus) hosts field crops and vegetables. Tulkarem and Salfit mostly grow trees and suffer from the implantation of industrial settlements. The Ramallah and Jerusalem regions are diversified but much less important in terms of agriculture.

1.3. Structure of the Palestinian farms³⁰

Over 92% of West Bank farms are less than 4 hectares and 66% of farms are less than 1 hectare. Less than 1 Palestinian farmer out of 2 owns a tractor and less than 1 out of 10 when it comes to herders. On the other hand, more than 1 peasant out of 2 uses only organic fertilizers and practices biological control against pests. In addition, 1 active woman out of 4 works in agriculture, against about 1 active man out of 10 and 9 times out of 10 the women are unpaid family members. All these indicators are evidence of the economic and social importance of the agricultural sector, but also the clear predominance of peasant familial farming.

In addition, there was a sharp decrease in the share of agriculture in employment over the past 15 years and the number of women living off agriculture has declined faster than the number of men. Accelerated disappearance of women in agriculture and increased use of chemical inputs are telltale signs of the loss of family farming, mostly to other sectors, but also in favor of a more industrialized agriculture. It is important to note that unlike the male population, whose overall level of unemployment has increased only slightly in 20 years, agricultural job losses for women are only slightly offset by paid employment in agriculture or other sectors. Today's overall unemployment rate is 23% in the West Bank and 50% in Gaza.



6 Grandmother participating in the olive harvest with her children and grandchildren in Jayuz – Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

³⁰ PCBS. Interviews with actors 2013.

1.4. One specificity: the case of the Bedouins³¹

68% of farms are exclusively vegetable farms, 10% only livestock farms and 22% are mixed³². This repartition hides the diversity of the agricultural population and inequalities in the current situation. Indeed, the vast majority of livestock farms, and to a lesser extent mixed farms, are those of Bedouins (from the Arabic *bedu*, "inhabitant of the desert"), historically found in the deserts of Syria, Arabia, the Negev and the Sahara. They are distinguished more by their strong tribal social structure and their almost exclusive practice of pastoralism, driven by regular annual and geographically precise migration motivated by the need to renew the grazing areas.

However, since the early twentieth century, because of the succession of colonization, conflicts, establishment of militarized borders, the appearance of motor vehicles, exploitation of oil in the Persian Gulf and even prejudice against them, Bedouin pastoralism has almost disappeared. In historical Palestine, the majority of Bedouin are still herders but their traveling has been rendered impossible by draconian circulation restrictions imposed by the occupier. Thus, they are forced to settle and often become employees, mostly in colonial agriculture.



7 Bedouins crossing the road in Israel – Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

The antagonization of this traditional way of life makes Bedouin the poorest population and the most vulnerable to climatic hazards and military violence that regularly destroys entire villages, which consist mainly of light habitations and covered shelters for livestock. Moreover, in the Middle East, they are victims of an image of "barbarian thieves without loyalty," even among Arab populations, probably because of the many tribal conflicts and later, because of their enrollment in the different armies killing

each other in the region. More recently, the Bedouin of the Sinai in particular make a living from their knowledge of the desert by transporting migrants and contraband goods to Israel and Gaza.

In the current West Bank, however, these facts are not a source of conflict between farmers regardless of their origin, because against the common enemy all are Palestinians. It is important to keep in mind the specificity of this full-fledged people, particularly attacked in its culture and identity by the prevalent policies in the region.

³¹ Interviews with actors and peasants 2013, 2014. Adalah (interviews and Website).

³² PCBS.

2. Dangers and constraints penalizing Palestinian agriculture

2.1. The land: between colonization and degradation



8 Industrial palm grove in the Argaman agricultural settlement on the Jordanian border in the Jordan Valley. In the background, mountains in Jordan. In the foreground, road 90: an apartheid road prohibited to Palestinians - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

Settlements are established so as to ensure their residents access to water and fertile land. That is why farmlands are particularly affected by colonization.

In addition, around each settlement itself, that is to say the built-up area, there are three security zones ("immediate", "enhanced" and "peripheral"), as well as roads reserved to settlers, which increase the amount of plundered Palestinian land and the obstacles to movement³³.

On the other hand, competition between settlers affects Palestinians: when two settler farmers compete with each other for the expansion of their facility, they end up colonizing a Palestinian farmer's land (even if it's cultivated)³⁴.

Inspired by Ottoman and British law, Israel very strictly implements the law known as the "three years' law." Indeed, under Ottoman rule, most of the land belonged to the Sultan. Arable land could be sold or loaned to individual farmers and grazing lands were mostly used collectively. However, to avoid speculation on land prices and maintain agricultural labor and production, the Sultan could requisition and redistribute farmland if it remained uncultivated for more than 7 years. At the administrative level, these lands were considered "state land." British occupation authorities kept this regulation while encouraging farmers to apply for individual land titles and they recognized the collective rights on grazing lands, particularly essential to the Bedouins. The State of Israel recognizes only individual ownership of land. Therefore all collective land automatically became "state land." In addition, the vast majority of farmers did not have individual titles and the newly created state of Israel systematically refused to grant these documents to Palestinians³⁵. They also lowered the amount of time before land reverted to state land from seven to three years. Finally, given the numerous restrictions on agricultural activity (access to water, checkpoints...) and the difficulties farmers face living off their production, it is not uncommon

³³ Interviews with actors 2013, 2014.

³⁴ Interviews with peasants 2013.

³⁵ *Le statut de la terre*, Philippe Lewandowski. Démocratie & Socialisme, 30/03/2012.

for land to remain uncultivated for three years, becoming de-facto property of Israel. However, it is important to keep in mind that when land is coveted by settlers or the army, Israel does not bother to comply with the rules it itself proclaimed³⁶.



9 The wall traverses the land of Bil'in village, famous for its Friday demonstrations. All the land on the right is now the property of the Matityahu settlement - Andrew Beale - 2013

In addition, the wall separating the West Bank from Israel, whose construction is still in progress, is far from following the route of the Green Line. It penetrates deep inside the West Bank and completely encircles cities like Qalqilya, de-facto annexing about 15% of the West Bank. Concretely, like the building of settlements, the wall has caused the destruction of many Palestinian homes, separated many farmers from their land, deprived them from a well enclosed on the other side....

Furthermore, about a hundred permanent checkpoints, more or less vast, implanted on Palestinian roads, are physical barriers also cutting off Palestinian agricultural land and preventing circulation of people and goods³⁷.

On the other hand, farmers whose lands are below settlements regularly report settlers' sewage spills on their land, which sometimes makes it uncultivable, especially when it comes from industrial facilities handling chemicals³⁸.

We can add to this numerous regimes of land classification, all restricted to Palestinians. The main ones are military bases and their security areas, firing and training zones of the Israeli army which encompass existing Palestinian villages and natural reservations which are often grazing areas.

It goes without saying that all these classifications are decreed unilaterally by Israel. It is clear that these classifications' only purpose is to hinder Palestinian agriculture. For example, during the summer of 2013, dozens of hectares of "natural reservation" were burned by the army with no other apparent goal than preventing the Bedouin from grazing their animals there³⁹.



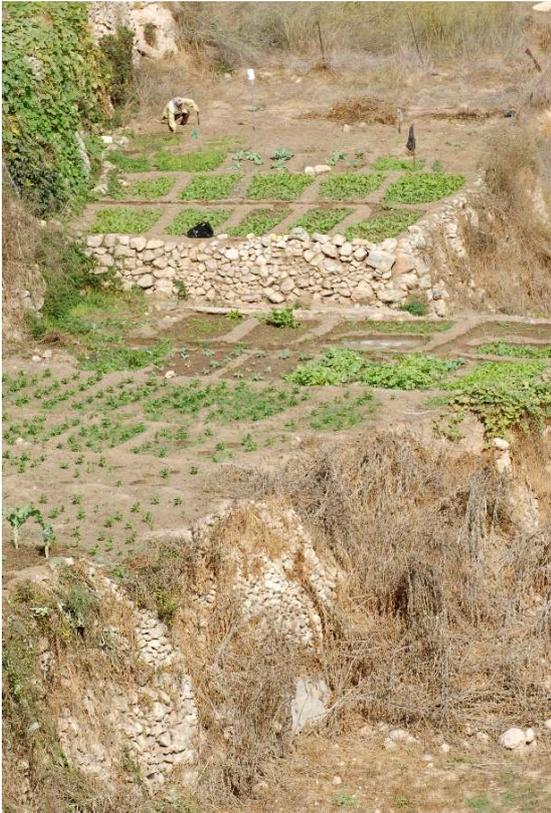
10 Firing area decreed by the army in front of the Bedouin village of Al Hamra - Andrew Beale - 08/2013

³⁶ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014.

³⁷ Ibid. Field observations.

³⁸ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013. *Soif de Justice : Le contrôle Israélien de l'eau dans les Territoires Palestiniens Occupés*, Thirsting for Justice, 2013.

³⁹ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014. Field observations.



11 Terraced eggplant cultivation in Battir, "the village of seven springs." Its terraces narrowly missed receiving a UNESCO price and are now endangered by the construction of the apartheid wall - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

Furthermore, soil erosion is also increasingly problematic. This phenomenon can be explained by several factors, starting with the mountainous topography. In addition, the semi-aridity or aridity of nearly 50% of the territory, often uncultivated due to restrictions on access to water, accelerates soil salinization. The remaining 26% of the territory considered sub-humid or humid is densely populated and highly artificialized, which increases erosion by trickling and also land drought.

On the other hand, industrial agricultural practices of settlers and recently of a handful of Palestinian farmers (such as plain monoculture in line) also contribute to the phenomenon. In addition, the reduction of available space for grazing due to restrictions on peasants' circulation intensifies overgrazing.

More visible is the overall reduction of green cover and, specifically, the sharp decline of terrace cultivation, due to many things such as the lack of income earned from vegetables or rural exodus caused by the harassment of the occupier and the economic development of the service sector. Erosion is therefore directly related to the forced transformation of agricultural practices and this is a big issue in the context of progressive desertification of the whole region⁴⁰.

Finally, it is important to note that the PA has no freedom of land-use planning, which remains at the discretion of the occupier⁴¹. In fact, land artificialization, either by settlements or to a lesser extent by the expansion of Palestinian towns, is also a factor in the loss of agricultural land⁴².

To conclude, although there is a deep understanding and appreciation in public, private and civil society of the extent of land degradation in the occupied territories, there are no available records on rates of land degradation, nor are there systematically-monitored significant indicators⁴³.

⁴⁰ LRC, interviews and documents: *Land Suitability and Development in the West Bank*, April 2010.

⁴¹ Ibid. Interviews with actors 2013, 2014.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

2.2. Water, the first battleground of the war⁴⁴



12 *Le Dessous des Cartes, Israël/Palestine : une Guerre pour l'eau ? – L'eau, l'enjeu stratégique pour Israël - July 2010*

The Six-Day War of 1967 is often called "the War for Water." Indeed, aside from territorial gains, Israel's main victory was to conquer the water resources of the region, preventing access not only to Palestinians, but also the surrounding Arab states (Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) through the destruction of dams built by these states, theft of the Jordan river's and Lake Tiberius' waters, the military control of the West Bank's aquifers, and the annexation of the Golan Heights⁴⁵ (Syrian territory).

More than for security or ideological reasons, it is also because its water supply affects its economic and political survival that Israel is constantly ogling southern Lebanon.

There are three main aquifers in historical Palestine, including two under the West Bank territory.

It is important to note that Israel controls all the surface-water and groundwater in the occupied territories, as well as the entire infrastructure of the pumping and piping systems. The vast majority of the water used inside Israel comes from the reserves of the occupied territories, either the West Bank or the Golan. In addition, the distribution of water is of course for the benefit of the occupier: 60 m³ per capita per year on average for the Palestinians against 300 m³ for the Israelis inside Israel and 600 m³ for settlers.



13 *Le Dessous des Cartes, Israël/Palestine : une Guerre pour l'eau ? – Trois aquifères à partager - July 2010*

The price of water, also at the discretion of the Israeli military, is on average two to three times higher for Palestinians than for Israelis, a fortiori when the Palestinians have to buy and carry water tanks when they are not connected to the "public" network (specifically inhabitants of area C). Finally, settlers enjoy almost free water, for whatever use (agricultural, industrial and recreational).

Apart from this distribution of "conventional" water resources, Israel employs methods such as desalination of sea water to support its agricultural and industrial activities, which literally drain the area.

⁴⁴ Thirsting for Justice (Website), 2013. *Israël/Palestine : une guerre pour l'eau ? – Le dessous des Cartes, Juillet 2010. Water Pricing Policy*, Palestinian Hydrology Group, 1998. Interviews with actors and peasants 2013, 2014. Field observations.

⁴⁵ *From Settlement to Shelf: The Economic Occupation of the Syrian Golan*, Al-Marsad – The Arab Center for Human Rights in the Golan, December 2009.

For example, the Dead Sea represents only 5% of its volume of the 60's and the Jordan River has no longer been visible on the surface for several years. Beyond the fact that it is a theft, there is clearly overexploitation of water resources due to intensive industrial agriculture and other industrial activities (quarries, chemical and plastic plants...).

Furthermore, today the Palestinians clearly suffer from a problem of water quality related particularly to industrial settlements and a lack of infrastructure for waste treatment, forbidden by the occupier. The major problems are water pollution (specifically nitrates, which are a real public health issue) and salinization of freshwater by infiltration of the aquifers. Gaza is the most distressed vis-à-vis this issue, a fortiori because of the multiple Israeli bombings that permanently contaminated water and crushed the water infrastructure. But the West Bank is no exception. For example, in the Jordan Valley, it is impossible to find fresh water at a depth of less than 300 m, which makes it impossible to cultivate many species, including vegetables and grains.

The administration of water is a symptomatic example of the Israeli policy of apartheid and, still today, this is probably the most sensitive issue for Israel. The Oslo Accords created the "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee" in which only the Israelis have a veto right, which they do not hesitate to use. Indeed, since 1967, no drilling authorization has been granted to Palestinians and only 23 permits were issued for the rehabilitation of drinking water systems in urban areas A and B.

As for agricultural wells, Palestinians' attempts to rehabilitate wells and other irrigation systems do not remain more than a few days before being destroyed, a fortiori in area C, in the Hebron and the Jordan Valley regions. Indeed, in area C, construction or rehabilitation of wells is officially "subject to authorization by Israeli military authorities." In practice, permits are never issued and the authorities drag their feet on the application files, sometimes for decades.

For instance, the local council of Al-Jiftlik village in the Jordan Valley (area C) transmitted a request to the PA negotiations department of the Governorate of Jericho for the rehabilitation of a well dating from the Ottoman period (like most of the Valley's wells) and destroyed by the army there decades ago. (The negotiations department of the PA is the only institution authorized to make requests to the Israeli military authorities.) Although this application was handed over more than 10 years ago, the answer arrived a few months ago and stated in substance: "We accept the request for rehabilitation on the condition of destroying the 134 illegal wells built in the area of Tubas" (a major agricultural area). It is obvious that this is not an acceptable condition⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013. Field observations.

What Israelis consider "illegal wells" are the ones built or rehabilitated after 1967 because they cannot legally destroy the preexisting ones (which does not, however, prevent them from doing it, as shown in this example). Thus, the mere fact of adding a roof over a well or changing a pipe is considered an illegal operation and can lead to the destruction of the entire apparatus. It is the same for homes, tents and other farm buildings in area C.



14 Khirbet Umm Al-Jimal village in the Jordan Valley, destroyed by the Israeli army - Andrew Beale - 02/2014

2.3. The inputs⁴⁷

The issue of availability, quality, use and impact of chemical inputs is a worrisome problem for health, environment and agriculture professionals. In fact, many chemicals in agricultural use are prohibited from importation into the Palestinian territories by Israel, officially "to prevent the risk of making bombs." However, some fertilizers and pesticides are allowed to circulate, some of which are banned in Europe, like the infamous DDT. In addition, the lack of training of farmers in the use of these products is not only responsible for actual soil pollution, but also of an explosion of the rate of cancer in agricultural populations. It is difficult to distinguish cases caused by agricultural pollution from those resulting from permanent human exposure to fumes generated by colonial industries and other incineration of garbage.

Furthermore, given the low production of organic fertilizers (cattle, sheep and goats being mostly pastured extensively, poultry manure is the most available), farmers use what they can. In the Jordan Valley for example, some farmers buy the very-little-composted "manure" from the settlers, which is composed of all the household waste of the settlements, including human organic waste, plastic packaging and glass. This allows settlers to not treat their waste and to make money off of it in addition.

2.4. The labor force

Labor is a problem mentioned by all farmers who still have some land and water. During the interviews, many farmers have expressed their willingness to cultivate more land but they face the limits of their own capability to work. Low mechanization of the vast majority of farms makes the labor force indispensable. Moreover, in fact, agriculture is rarely able to sustain entire families, so children go to work in other sectors such as construction, or services if their education allows it. Many farmers themselves also combine work on their land with work in the surrounding agricultural settlements for

⁴⁷ Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014. Field observations.

additional income. Obviously, the income derived from their production does not allow them to hire laborers at the same wages as Israeli settlements, however ridiculous those wages already are.

However, sharecropping is still practiced, especially for remunerative crops (like dates) and sharecroppers are mostly landless and very poor families who move with the seasons following word-of-mouth. Thus, some farmers are left with land that they do not have time to cultivate, which clearly exposes them to colonization⁴⁸.

2.5. Impossible circulation⁴⁹

Circulation restrictions affect both people and goods. To move from one point to another, one must go through checkpoints and make many detours because cars with Palestinian plates cannot go on the settlers' roads, the most recently constructed and direct routes.

Besides, farmers who have land on the other side of the wall are dependent on the Israeli authorities to obtain a crossing permit to cultivate their own land, which is a long process of several months, expensive and arbitrary. Many farmers cannot obtain a permit because they do not have a property title approved by the Israeli authorities. For example, if only one letter differs from the name written on the identity document of the applicant and the property title, the permit is denied. In addition, particularly during the massive olive harvest, the whole family is needed for the harvest. However, permits are only granted individually.

A peasant in Jayuz, near Qalqilya, explained that despite multiple requests from many members of his family to harvest their olive trees on the other side of the wall, the Israeli authorities only issued two permits, one to his father and one to his mother, both octogenarians.



15 Crossing the agricultural checkpoint of Jayuz. Young soldiers meticulously search dozens of farmers waiting in line. There is a second point of control for permits after the electrified fence - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

Once permits are obtained, farmers must go through agricultural checkpoints, dedicated to farmers deprived of their land by the wall. This is only possible during certain periods of the year and at specific times, at the discretion of the occupying authority. Most of the time they are closed in the winter and are open from 8 to 9 AM and from 4 to 5 PM, regardless of the hours of queues and arbitrary decisions by soldiers.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014. Field observations.

In addition, the fields are sometimes several kilometers away from the checkpoint, forcing farmers to make huge detours, causing loss of time and additional costs.

Finally, concerning goods, a farmer from Qalqilya explained that trucks carrying fruits, vegetables or chickens could be stopped and searched at checkpoints for hours. Products thus left in the sun get damaged very fast are at best substandard, if not lost.

2.6. The agricultural markets



16 Massive watering in the middle of the day on an industrial field of export products in Israel, on the road to Gaza - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

Palestinian farmers are also victim to classic dumping implemented by countries that have subsidized agriculture as is the case in Israel, most of all in the settlements. Indeed, in the case of settlements, Palestinian farmers not only undergo unfair competition with settler-farmers for markets, but also for the use of their own resources.

On the other hand, Israeli products literally flood the Palestinian market at lower prices than the Palestinian non-subsidized production. In addition, the small Palestinian peasant agriculture cannot compete with the Israeli industrial agriculture when it comes to off-season produce. Taking the example of grapes, there are Israeli grapes on the market at the end of May while Palestinian grapes will not be ready until mid-August. In consequence, the price of Palestinian grapes is much lower because the demand is higher early in the season and these grapes arrive in already-saturated markets.

In addition, given the clauses of so-called "economic cooperation" introduced by the Paris Protocol (an economic extension of the Oslo Accords), Israeli goods enter more or less limitlessly in the Palestinian territories, while in the opposite case, Israel imposes quotas changing according to its own needs. It is therefore almost impossible to predict the selling price of a product at the time of sowing.

Furthermore, all the borders being controlled by Israel (including the Jordanian border), Palestinians have difficulty exporting their surplus production elsewhere, particularly as Jordanian farmers produce the same products in the same seasons. This is also true between the West Bank and Gaza. The majority of products exported by the West Bank go through Israeli companies. This rule can be extended to all agricultural products.

Finally, all Palestinian products, specifically exportable products, are dominated by oligopolies or monopolies even within Palestine. They dominate the market, impose their prices, benefit from advantages in terms of export and it is difficult for smaller production and marketing structures to compete within the Palestinian market⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ *Paris Accords*, integral published text. Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014.

2.7. Economical and agricultural Palestinian policies⁵¹

It is impossible to conceive the concept of food sovereignty as an objective in the context of a complete lack of sovereignty of the PA or the Palestinian people on anything.

In any case, the public funds allocated to agriculture are falling, the financial contribution of the PA being clearly directed to cities and services. The logic of this decision is largely dictated by donors and reflects policies similar to the Structural Adjustment Plans dear to the World Bank, a reservoir for Palestinian politicians. Thus, the arrival of Salam Fayyad in the government in 2007 saw investment in unproductive sectors (telephone, construction...) explode which has resulted in improved growth... but increased unemployment.

Indeed, despite the fact that agriculture accounts for about 5% of the Palestinian GDP, the PA budget allocated to agriculture is around 1%. Moreover, in agriculture, funding is mainly attributed to the development of industrial agriculture for export and not to attaining self-sufficiency, which is not a political goal.

So the idea is to develop agriculture for export (cut flowers, dates...) to get currency and thus be able to buy the less expensive subsistence products from outside the country, mainly from Israel (80% of imports came from Israel in the late 90s). At the production level, the idea is to promote technicality, mechanization and modernization of farms. In addition, to target international markets, it is necessary to develop an upstream food industry of seeds, fertilizers and chemicals (mostly imported) and a downstream one for processing, packaging, certification.... This is also necessarily accompanied by the development of related services, such as banking and insurance.

For example, for natural disasters that have severely affected farmers in recent years, adding to the destruction of the settlers and the army, the response of the state is to promote adherence to private insurance. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture agrees that *"all farms will not be insured, but at least, the large intensive farms that we have in Palestine will be protected."* Following this logic, two years ago, farmers – massively below the poverty line – became taxable.

The international development agencies and the PA are very clear on the fact that traditional agriculture, especially Bedouin, *"is not intended to remain in a context where it is neither profitable nor appropriate to the application of healthy and quality products."* Logically, long-term development projects are reserved for the expansion and specialization of farms. Small farms, despite being the most affected by the various attacks related to the occupation, are only entitled to emergency humanitarian programs.

We are therefore facing two-speed agricultural policies felt very violently by farmers who clearly feel that decision-makers believe *"when you have no tractor, you are not a farmer."* Yet officials repeated

⁵¹ Interviews with actors 2013, 2014.

that "*the greening of Palestine is a primary pillar objective,*" that "*agriculture is considered the backbone of the Palestinian economy*" and that "*85% of the agricultural population is small farmers.*"

How to green Palestine, improve economic indicators and unemployment without 85% of the agricultural population? Aren't these practices that are considered backward here the same ones that European citizens, exhausted by the ravages of industrial agriculture, are calling for? How can it be better to encourage the export of local production in the context of closed borders when we admit that "*Palestinian agricultural export cannot compete with Israeli agricultural export companies which benefit from more land, water and facilitated access to the market?*" How to ridicule the goal of food self-sufficiency when we know that the main supplier of Palestine is a state that wants to see it disappear? The reasoning of respectable agricultural economists remains impenetrable.

In short, the general and agricultural policies of the PA are oriented towards the valuation and the concentration of capital at the risk of leaving aside the little remaining sovereignty in terms of culture, food security, employment, environment and health. Farmers and unionists reiterate that agriculture and its workers are doubly attacked: first by the Israeli colonization on the one hand and then by economic and agricultural policies on the other hand.

3. Consequences

3.1. Food security and poverty⁵²

The number of people living below the poverty line has increased massively over the last ten years, reaching 47% in the West Bank and 77% in Gaza. In the West Bank, the 25% of households earning less than \$1.9 per day per person are food insecure and 41% if we add households considered vulnerable to food insecurity (against 67% in Gaza). Indeed, food insecurity in the West Bank is not related to a lack of food, but to the inability of people to get food because of their low incomes.

Moreover, food insecurity mainly affects agricultural and rural populations and, to a lesser extent, urban refugees. As proof, the number of people facing food insecurity is a third higher in area C than in areas A and B. The households whose head is a woman are much more vulnerable to food insecurity than when the household's head is a man.

Clearly, the increasing poverty and food insecurity are linked to the Israeli political will to destroy agriculture in the occupied territories to make the occupied population dependent on Israel for food. Israel doubly benefits from this situation by grabbing resources and by the provision of forced labor on the one hand and by the fact that the occupied territories are its captive markets on the other.

⁵² UN/FAO: *Socio-economic & Food Security Survey*, 2012. Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014

3.2. “Modernization,” neoliberalism and colonization get along: the emblematic case of the Praver-Begin Plan.

The plan of forced relocation of more than 70,000 Bedouin from the Negev desert, better known under the name "the Praver-Begin Plan" (named after the Israeli politicians who wrote the proposal), proves that the Israeli policies of colonization, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and violent destruction of the traditional peasantry of indigenous peoples are not limited to the occupied territories.

Indeed, the majority of the Negev Bedouin, who are citizens of Israel, live in villages which occupy 1.8% of the land of the desert, concentrated in the North. It is important to remember that in 1948, during the Nakba⁵³, the 15% of Bedouin who did not flee to the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan and Egypt were forced to move to this area by Israel⁵⁴. However, 45 of these villages are "unrecognized" by Israel, so are not connected to public infrastructure (water, electricity, roads, schools, health...).

Today, the bill approved by the Knesset⁵⁵ at the first two readings is to relocate the Bedouins again into planned urban cities, officially to allow them access to basic services (which are already provided to nearby Jewish communities) or even because they are "taking over the Negev." But unofficial reasons are much more terrifying and have a longer history.

The civil-society organization Adalah speaks of "*criminalization of the lifestyle of the Bedouin, the indigenous peoples of the Negev and Israeli citizens, who are victims of ethnic cleansing.*" In 1963, Israeli general Moshe Dayan said clearly: "*We need to turn the Bedouins into an urban proletariat in industry, services, construction and agriculture... this is a radical change which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but become an urban person who comes home in the afternoon and puts his slippers on.... His children would go to school with hair properly combed. It will be a revolution, but that may be fixed in two generations... this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear.*" Today, the need for a labor force, the imposition of economic dependency to the capitalist economy and ultimately the extinction of all Bedouin claims and ambitions, are more than ever on the agenda of the current state of Israel. The Praver Plan is the genuine expression of that agenda.

In addition, the Praver Plan comes as the State is launching a vast plan for development of the Negev including a military base, an industrial-military-IT complex, Jewish towns and an industrial park

⁵³ Nakba: "disaster" or "catastrophe" in Arabic, it refers to the massive forced exodus of about 750,000 Palestinians during the 1947-1949 war that created the State of Israel in 1948. They were massacred en masse and chased out of their towns and villages, eventually destroyed by Zionist militias such as Irgun or the Haganah. Others fled fearing the same fate and others followed the evacuation orders issued by the Arab armies. These refugees were denied the right to return to their land (guaranteed by UN conventions) during and after the war and until today. In fact, 80% of West Bank Palestinians are refugees. Others had to go abroad, especially to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where they have different levels of rights.... Meanwhile, between 1948 and 1951, 260,000 Jews arrived in the '48 territories.

⁵⁴ BIMKOM (Website and interviews 2013).

⁵⁵ Knesset: Israeli Parliament, headquartered in Jerusalem. Knesset members are elected for 4 years and have to swear an oath accepting Zionism. The Knesset has jurisdiction over Israel but not over the occupied territories that remain unilaterally controlled by the army.

hosting, for instance, SodaStream⁵⁶, a soft-drink company targeted by international pressure for its location in the occupied territories. The idea is to create skilled jobs to allow Jewish people to settle the Negev to reduce real estate and demographic pressure on Israeli homes on the coast. It is clear that it will not be Israeli soldiers or educated Jews that will build, clean and become factory workers.



17 Demonstration against the Praver Plan in the Negev Desert on 01/08/2013. A Bedouin facing the Israeli army - Andrew Beale

The announcement of this plan provoked massive protests against the systematic oppression of '48 Palestinians. The demonstrations were violently repressed by the Israeli army, both in Israel and in the occupied territories. The government, apparently surprised by the extent of mobilization, officially removed the law for amendment, but all organizations involved know that this is only to prepare the law for a stronger return. Moreover, the Israeli general in charge of the implementation of the Plan continues to carry out the demolition of villages, started several years ago. Al-Araqib village is a symbol of this.

Destroyed more than 60 times over the last three years, today its remaining inhabitants replant their tents on what was their cemetery. Bedouins, either from Israel or the West Bank say it themselves: they endure *"a little Praver Plan every day."*

Finally, it is interesting to note that state representatives of the colonized state and international development experts share the disdain of Bedouins promoted by the colonizing State. This is an interview extract with a top official whose name will not be mentioned out of respect for his refusal to be recorded at that time:

—*"Don't you think the agricultural policies implemented in Palestine are weakening traditional agriculture in general and more specifically small farmers? I'm thinking of the Bedouins for example."*

—*"Look, I'm also for 'cultural development.' We keep saying 'this is traditional, it's great' but these are not just traditional methods, they are unhealthy ones... Bedouin make the cheese in unsanitary conditions without washing their hands. It's like the women who sell olives and pickles in reused coke bottles... they say it is the traditional way, well no, it's the wrong and unhygienic way. They have to learn better and more modern methods."*

—*"Did you ever get sick from Bedouin cheese?"*

—*"Oh no, I don't eat that!"*

—*"Really? I do and I'm alright..."*

⁵⁶ SodaStream: Israeli multinational company specialized in the manufacture of gasification equipment for drinks for individuals. It was the target of BDS campaign efforts for the establishment of its largest factory in the settlement of Maale Adumim, implanted on 5 Palestinian villages and two Bedouin tribes' lands, expelled by the army. In response, the group said they do not want to abandon their 500 Palestinian workers on behalf of political manipulation, and despite the violations of labor law criticized by unions, SodaStream strives to redeem its image and will open a fourteenth factory in the Negev soon. The group is still boycotted by several countries and has been sanctioned by the EU for its abuse of the label *"Made in Israel."*

PART 3:
IMMIGRATION AND LABOR IN ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND
THE SETTLEMENTS:
AN APARTHEID REGIME WHERE ILLEGALITY AND
EXPLOITATION ARE THE NORM

1. Israel, a racist and segregationist society

1.1. Immigration in Israel: a two-tiered system

Studying migrant workers in Israel, it's inevitable to question the very definition of a migrant in a country where 40% of the population are first generation immigrants and 25% are second generation⁵⁷. It is appropriate to distinguish mainly Jewish immigration, labor immigration and humanitarian immigration (refugees and asylum seekers). Indeed, Jewish immigrants benefit from the law of the "right of return" that gives them – among others things –housing and various public services. This contributes to the "demographic security" of the Jewish state, worried by the growth of the Arab population. However, even among Jewish immigrants, there is an ethnic distinction⁵⁸.

In the 90's, there was a wave of migration (300,000 people) from the former USSR, mainly Russia. Although they were not all Jews, these migrants were easily accepted because they are white and culturally close to Ashkenazim. In addition, welcoming these migrants is also helping Israel to increase the number of settlers, the unofficial supplementary elements of the army of occupation⁵⁹.

On the other hand, although the Falasha⁶⁰ (Ethiopian Jews) were brought by the government during large military operations in 1984 and 1991, they do not receive quite the same treatment⁶¹. In 2000, the State admitted guilt for injecting long-term contraceptives into massive numbers of Ethiopian women, claiming that it was a vaccine necessary for entry into Israel⁶². No later than 2013, the equivalent of the Red Cross in Israel has publicly refused to take the blood of a Falasha Knesset member. After her strong public reaction, her blood was eventually collected... but the authorities specified that it would be frozen and unused⁶³.

⁵⁷ *Foreign Workers in Israel: History and Theory*. David V. Bartram, 1998, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Falasha means "exiled" or "immigrant" in Amharic and is used to refer to Ethiopian Jews. Although it is common, it is considered pejorative by Ethiopian Jews who mainly use the terms of "Beta Israel," "Kayla," "Esra'elawi" or "Ethiopim."

⁶¹ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013. Field observations.

⁶² *Israel forcibly injected African immigrant women with birth control*, Forbes 28/01/2013.

⁶³ *Uproar as Ethiopian mk denied chance to give blood*, Times of Israel, 11/12/2013. *Ethiopian mk stunt may result in compromising Israel's blood supply*, Jewish Press, 12/12/2013.



18 Demonstration of more than 20 000 refugees in front of the Knesset in Jérusalem against the systematic incarceration of African migrants - Andrew Beale - January 2014

Israeli High Court of Justice, and they are now held in an "open prison" in which they must sign in three times a day. The prison is located in the middle of the Negev and the draconian sign-in procedures make it impossible to get a job.

This year too, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reached an agreement with Uganda consisting in the sale of weapons in exchange for Uganda accepting refugees to "*physically get rid of infiltrators*," in violation of all kinds of humanitarian considerations⁶⁵. Similarly, Interior Minister Eli Yishai is convinced that refugees are infected with "*a wide range of diseases*" and promised to "*lock them all up to make their lives miserable*." Regular pogroms against Africans committed by Jewish white supremacists are rarely punished⁶⁶.

In short, immigration of Jews is encouraged, but non-Jews, especially blacks, are far from welcome. If this situation has led to the emergence of an important social movement, there is no convergence between the migrant workers and the refugees and even less with the Palestinian movement.

1.2. Labor structure in Israel⁶⁷

The Israeli economy, specifically the sectors of agriculture, construction and industry, has an insatiable need for cheap labor and employers closely look after their interests⁶⁸. Although this share decreased in recent years, especially with the growth of military IT and tourism, agriculture still accounts

⁶⁴ Interviews with actors and refugees 2013.

⁶⁵ *Israel said planning to deport African migrants to Uganda*, Allyn Fisher-Ilan, 29/98/2013, Reuters.

⁶⁶ *The desert of Israeli democracy*, Max Blumenthal, October 2013, Le Monde Diplomatique English Edition.

⁶⁷ *The 10 plagues of the Israeli labor market* (Video), Kav Laoved, 19/03/2013.

⁶⁸ David Bartram. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013.

for nearly 3% of the GDP and about 4% of exports (with 13% certified organic)⁶⁹. The availability of cheap labor is the main factor for the competitiveness of Israeli agricultural exports on international markets⁷⁰.

On the other hand, the history of immigration to Israel has strongly contributed to structuring the segregation of the labor market. In short, Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Bedouins are at the bottom of the social ladder, then come the non-Jewish immigrants, '48 Palestinians and Falashas are pretty much equally despised, the Sephardi are highly disadvantaged and Ashkenazi embody the economic and political elite. Consequently, there is almost no technical development of these sectors and Israelis usually prefer to be unemployed (even without public aid), rather than find a job commonly known as "*Arab work*."⁷¹

Finally, if the discrimination between Israeli Jews is due to ordinary racism, it is important to clarify that the prohibition against '48 Palestinians working in various sectors such as communications (airports, phone companies...), IT or security are enshrined in law. Thus, apartheid also applies to '48 Palestinians who have the highest unemployment rates, as well as the lowest access to water and land⁷².

1.3. Palestinian workers (from the West Bank and Gaza) In the '48 territories

In 1967, Israel closed the borders with Egypt and Jordan, depriving itself of cheap labor to perform work like agriculture and construction. By necessity, they let in the Palestinian laborers (already entering "illegally"), which also had the aim of avoiding instability in the occupied territories.

In the mid-80s, 110,000 Palestinians were employed in the '48 territories, only half of them with a permit, in construction, agriculture and services. They represented 25% of the workforce in agriculture and 45% in construction until 1996. These proportions dropped but the employment of Palestinians in Israel remains essential, not only to the Israeli economy, but also for entire families in the West Bank⁷³.

Work permits are granted to Palestinians sparingly: each year, the government publishes the quota of permits that will be issued, per sector and nationality. Permits are granted for a short period and a specific job. To obtain a work permit, employers must make a request to Israeli authorities to hire a Palestinian, *theoretically* having to show that no Jew is available for the position. Applications must be approved by the Ministry of the Interior and the civil administration (the Israeli body of the army in the occupied territories). The procedures are very long and the criteria prohibitive.

⁶⁹ Israeli Ministry of Agriculture (Website) 2012.

⁷⁰ David Bartram. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Rencontre avec un syndicaliste de Sawt El Amal*, (Vidéo) 08/04/2010. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013.

⁷³ David Bartram.

Indeed, to get a permit, they must be at least 35 years old (25 tolerated for industrial workers), be married and they must have no record of "offense to the security of Israel," knowing that from 1967 to 2000, 40 % of Palestinian men have experienced the Israeli military prisons⁷⁴.



19 Taybeh checkpoint: crossing point of more than 10,000 workers a day, coming from the regions of Tulkarm, Jenin and Nablus. The workers wait for up to 6 hours to enter Israel to reach their workplace. It's here that a worker was crushed to death in January 2014.

Moreover, the Palestinians do not have the right to spend the night in Israel, but despite the risks, many of them sleep on the spot to avoid the costs and time spent in transportation. Indeed, they must bend through the humiliating and exhausting checkpoint crossings. For example, the average waiting time is 2.5 hours at the Tulkarem checkpoint.

All these constraints increase the number of candidates for illegal work in Israel. This vulnerability ensures that violation of the labor law is the rule for these workers⁷⁵.

In addition, random checks by the border police inside Israel heavily penalize hundreds of Palestinian workers with at best huge fines (about NIS 5,000) and at worst imprisonment. Finally, the illegal crossing of Israeli borders is dangerous and expensive.

⁷⁴ Addameer (Website and Interview 2013).

⁷⁵ Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014. Field observations.

1.4. Illegal border crossing: dangerous and expensive⁷⁶

...We reach the entrance of the agricultural village of Adahria. At the crossroads, several pick-ups and other rugged vehicles and a few people waiting around. A. explains that owners of cars are waiting for passengers to take them illegally to cross the electrified fence that separates the village from Israel.

We continue through the village, on the rocky roads rutted by the rain to follow the car transporting workers. The road between the crossroads and the border is only 3 km long. For this short journey, the driver will charge each worker 100 shekels. Most of the time, they take about 8 passengers in cars with 4 seats... but the end justifies the means.

Arriving at the border, the driver lets off passengers and their bundles and then turns back to go load up some more passengers at the crossroads. Their ballet is incessant, day and night. The passengers are on the Palestinian side until two cars arrive in a whirlwind on the other side of the road, on the Israeli side. At this very moment, they jump and run to cross the fence where it is damaged, cross the road racing and rush inside the two cars that take off immediately. The drivers on the other side will also take 100 shekels for the ride. That day, they are all lucky: no soldier on the horizon, no injuries, no deaths.

However, A., who is very present in the village in recent months, tells me that when soldiers patrol it often ends more dramatically. If they see Palestinians crossing, they shoot on sight, with or without warning. If the soldiers surprise passengers during the transfer, they chase the cars, who attempt to outrun them. These drivers are known for acting like they're in a Formula 1 race and accidents are frequent. Indeed, during their flight, they often cause car accidents. The last one, last month, killed four people a few miles away. Those who were not beheaded died of asphyxiation...

1.5. The role of Israeli “unionism”⁷⁷

Israeli unionism, embodied by the Histadrut (trade union federation) is Zionist, insofar as it develops the idea of Jewish preference. For example, it ordered higher employer contributions to influence Arab employers to favor Jewish Israelis. It is a co-manager syndicate that controlled 20% of Israel's economy in 1970. Because it is an employer unionism, particularly implanted in the public sector, its ability to influence public decisions relative to labor is colossal.

For example, when the lack of labor force was denounced by employers, some employers proposed to invest directly in the occupied territories, to prevent recurring problems related to border closures and take advantage of cheap labor directly at the source. But the Israeli government didn't view the

⁷⁶ Field observations, December 2013, Hebron area.

⁷⁷ David Bartram. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014. *Syndicalisme et travailleurs migrants en Israël*, CNT, 17/04/2005.

development of economic activity in the occupied territories in a good light, to the extent that it would be the prelude to the creation of a Palestinian state and undermine its lucrative dependence on Israel. On the one hand, the Histadrut won the opportunity to let Palestinian workers come inside Israel to maintain a general pressure on wages. On the other hand, it sued the government for creating a shortage in the labor force, gained permission to import a foreign labor force and actively involved itself in its oppression. It's not only that migrants cannot benefit from its services, but in 2002 the Histadrut clearly called for the denunciation of illegal migrant workers.

Today, all workers, regardless of their origin, contribute to the Histadrut via their salary. Palestinian workers pay for nothing (about NIS 100 per month) because they cannot benefit from the legal services (health, retirement...) or have a union, as they are not residents of Israel. These employer contributions for Palestinian workers have also been maintained by the Histadrut to ensure that employers do not prefer the Palestinians to Jews or foreigners.

1.6. Non-Jewish or labor immigration⁷⁸

In the late 80s, the importation of foreign workers was seen as a miracle solution to solve the problems of internal security and supply employers with a cheap labor force. In addition, the separation of Palestinians and Israelis was perceived by many as "assisting the peace process."

50% of them came from Asia, 45% from Eastern Europe (especially Romania) and 5% from Latin America and Africa. The work is ethnically segregated. In 1979, an airport project, included in the agreements of Camp David, specified that its construction must be completed 100% by Thai and Portuguese laborers. Out of the 1400 workers employed for the construction, only 5 remained in the country afterward. When the development of the textile sector intensified in 1987, 3,000 work permits were issued, to Portuguese only.

Consequences for Palestinians: between 1989 and 1996, the number of work permits granted to Palestinians was divided by 10, while the number of permits granted to foreigners was multiplied by 30. The situation was no better for migrant workers. Indeed, meanwhile, the Ministry of the Interior began to hunt for illegal migrant workers because it was out of the question for the government to allow the development of a second generation of non-Jewish immigrants in the country.

⁷⁸ Ibid. *Les travailleurs étrangers ou l'impact d'une immigration non juive sur la citoyenneté israélienne*. Caroline Rozenholc, 2010, Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem. *Globalisation des migrations internationales : dynamiques et modalités ; Une contribution réflexive à partir du cas israélien*, William Berthomière. *OECD social, employment and migration working papers N° 103: Reforming policies on foreign workers in Israel*, Adriana Kemp, 19/03/2010.



20 Wanted notice for Romanian workers in Hebrew and Romanian: « Avis de recherche de travailleurs roumains en hébreu et roumain : "A reward of 3,000 dollars for anyone possessing precise information about the location of these workers who escaped from their legal employer" – *Syndicalisme et travailleurs migrants en Israël – CNT (Confédération Nationale de Travail) – April 2005.*

All means were acceptable: official threats, incentives to denounce others or to surrender, or even "Wanted" notices. Also, a woman who announces pregnancy becomes automatically illegal. In fact, unemployment is soaring in these communities and evictions mainly target men. 90% of women in the communities of migrant workers are single mothers.

In addition, all migrant workers must pay commissions to recruitment agencies which include taxes for the Ministry of Labor and Industry to obtain a work permit. Since they usually don't have this money, they have it loaned by the recruitment agencies operating in the countries of origin and who will collect their due with interest on the migrants' future wages.

This system, illegal until 2004, robs each worker of \$2,000 to \$12,000. Some states of origin add complications: for example, the Chinese government requires about \$9,000 from each candidate for emigration and confiscates his passport. All workers have permits of a maximum duration of 5 years and 3 months and there is no long-term residence permit in Israel (regardless of the reason for the presence in the territory, except for Jews). In addition, sometimes, the position promised by the recruitment agency does not exist: the worker finds himself in debt and illegal in the territory immediately upon arrival, without even the possibility of leaving.

Furthermore, work permits are not granted to the worker but to the company, which often delegates recruitment to manpower agencies that manage portfolios of permits. If an employee changes employer or sector, either voluntarily or at the request of his boss, he becomes not only an illegal worker, but an illegal migrant in the country. When migrants become couples, one of them is expelled to prevent settlement. The status of children born to one or two non-Jewish migrant parents is a huge problem still today. In addition, the confiscation of passports by employers is a common practice, which makes every administrative procedure impossible (bank account...) and deprives the workers of the possibility to know their status vis-à-vis their visa. The employer can also call the army in case of "indiscipline" of the worker.

The systematic criminalization of migrants goes further: as recruitment agencies and employers cannot obtain new permits if they don't prove that the previous worker has left the territory, they willingly cooperate in the police's efforts to track them down. Indeed, they have a vested interest in deporting migrants to get new commissions on new permits, not to mention that an illegal worker is more vulnerable and therefore more docile. Indeed, today, legal or not, 80% of migrant workers earn less than minimum wage. They are *legally* cheaper than Palestinians (but more expensive in practice)

and the financial windfall generated by the commission system is estimated at \$3 billion per year (split between recruitment agencies, employers and the state).

In short, it is clear that in this context, in addition to classic difficulties (language barriers, lack of knowledge of their rights), migrant workers are not encouraged to claim their rights. Today, Thai people are agricultural workers, Chinese and Central African migrants work in construction and Indians and Sri Lankans work in geriatric departments and caregiving because of their fluency in English.

On the commission system: since 2012, bilateral agreements were signed between the Thai and Israeli governments under the auspices of the ILO. These agreements occurred only under the joint pressure of Kav LaOved, an Israeli NGO defending migrant workers' rights and European members of the OECD⁷⁹. However, the number of permits granted in this framework is limited and although it is too early to evaluate, it is quite unlikely that the criminalization of migrants fades away in the near future.



21 Kav Laoved logo: Migrant Workers' Hotline

1.7. Thai workers in agriculture



22 Thai worker in Messua settlement, Jordan Valley - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

⁷⁹ Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development. It is an international organization for economic studies whose members are “developed” countries with “democratic governments,” under market economies.

Depending on the source, an estimated 48,000⁸⁰ or 24,600⁸¹ Thai workers are employed in agriculture in the '48 territories⁸² and the settlements. About 1,100 of them are working in the settlements of the Jordan Valley. These workers mostly originate from farmers' families in northern Thailand and emigrated because the traditional cultivation of rice can no longer compete with industrial farms.

If, unlike the Palestinians, the Thai workers have employment contracts, they are not treated well so far. The legal monthly minimum wage of a Thai farm worker in Israel is NIS⁸³ 4,700, NIS 3,900 in settlements of the occupied territories and NIS 20.20 per additional hour. This is about 30% less than the legal minimum wage granted to Israelis and more than twice the legal minimum wage of Palestinians. On the other hand, it is more profitable for a settler to use a Thai worker to the extent that labor is subsidized by the government through subsidies to agriculture. In addition, *legally*, they have a few advantages: decent housing must be provided by the employer, they get more days off than Israelis, regular bonuses, the ability to recover pension contributions before they leave....

However, the practice couldn't be further from legal. It is recognized that agricultural employers almost never pay legal wages. Thus, a worker questioned in a settlement of the Jordan Valley said he receives NIS 2,400 per month and NIS 15 per additional hour. Thai workers are rarely aware of the salary they should receive, let alone in the situation that their wages are paid on bank accounts that they cannot access regularly, farms being geographically isolated. Moreover, if the workers are supposed to work 8 hours per day, in practice, they sometimes say they are working up to 18 hours a day, with one day off in the off-season. Overtime is partially paid or not paid. However, employers are playing on the fact that as long as they can send a part of their salary to their families in Thailand, they consider themselves satisfied.

Like other workers, they manipulate chemicals without protection (this task is usually reserved for men) but are generally assigned to less dangerous tasks than Palestinian workers when they are in the same farms. Thus, the Thai workers are primarily assigned to harvests (especially women, reputed to be more delicate, for medicinal herbs, strawberries...). In the settlements of the Jordan Valley, they usually work in greenhouses while Palestinians work in the open fields, in manual labor and handling animals.

Their housing conditions are often disastrous: it is the most frequent case of violation with the non-payment of legal wages. They live in groups, men and women together, in slum-type housing, caravans located in the middle of greenhouses or in storage sheds. Women, already a minority among their male colleagues, are particularly affected by this situation, especially as they are sometimes called upon by the settler-manager to work as housekeepers or "masseuses."

⁸⁰ 2010 Ma'an report on agricultural migrant workers in the Israeli settlements of the Jordan Valley (translated from Arabic).

⁸¹ Kav Laoved (Website and Interviews 2013).

⁸² '48 territories: term used to refer to the state of Israel to contest its legitimacy and its recognition.

⁸³ NIS: New Israeli Shekels. The Shekel is the currency used in Israel and imposed on the occupied territories as the official currency by the Paris Protocol in 1994, through the creation of the Palestinian Monetary Authority. Jordanian dinar and US dollars are still used for some transactions. 10 NIS = 2 EUR = 2.85 USD.

In the settlements, workers are unable to claim their rights even when they're aware of them because there is no civilian labor administration. They cannot move around, and their remoteness from NGOs, the lack of translators (though it is mandatory for the administration) and the risk of becoming illegal for the slightest complaint are all factors that maintain their exploitation.

Palestinian workers, although they suffer from this competition that has enabled the expansion of settlements despite their massive strikes, remain aware that their Thai colleagues are also under pressure. They usually have colleagues' relationships in the work place but remain quite distant because of cultural and language differences and because of the instructions of the Israeli bosses advising Thai workers to keep their distance from the Arabs⁸⁴.

2. Labor structure in the West Bank and work in the settlements

2.1. Labor structure in the West Bank: focus on agriculture⁸⁵

In the West Bank, the unemployment rate reaches 23%. It is higher for women than for men, and their average daily wage is, respectively, NIS 73 and NIS 85 (against about NIS 280 in Israel). 15% of the workforce is employed in the public sector in which a third are security forces. It is commonly accepted that the public jobs are more to absorb unemployment and maintain social peace than to truly meet actual institutional needs. For example, the Presidential Office alone employs over 1500 employees, a few dozen more than the Ministry of Agriculture.

15% of the workforce is employed in the '48 territories and in Israeli settlements. This number remains an approximation insofar that many Palestinians work there illegally and that these jobs are inherently unstable (border crossings, agricultural seasons...). Moreover, there is a direct link between the border closures and the decline in unemployment in the West Bank. Indeed, the more borders are closed (as during the two Intifadas), the more people return to work in the West Bank, the vast majority of them in the agricultural sector. However, the wages workers can expect for unskilled positions in Israel and the settlements, even illegally, are two to three times higher than what they would get from Palestinian employers in the same sector.

The agricultural sector is the most important in terms of self-employment, informal labor (unpaid family members) and employed labor for women and the second most important for men. Agriculture is the fifth largest sector in terms of wage employment with 11.5% of the employed labor force. Agricultural wages are about 40% lower than wages in other sectors.

⁸⁴ Interviews with peasants and actors, 2013, 2014.

⁸⁵ PCBS (Interview 2013 and Website): statistics from 2011 and 2012. UN/FAO: *Socio-economic & Food Security Survey*, 2012. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013.

2.2. Palestinian labor in the settlements

In 2011, there were an estimated 26,831 Palestinians working in the agricultural and industrial settlements with a work permit and about 10,000 more without permits⁸⁶. It is estimated that this represents at least 10% of the Palestinian labor force, although it is difficult to provide reliable numbers. Amongst them, 94% have at most a level of studies equivalent to a high-school diploma. Half of them are married with a family to support (5 people on average) – this means that at least half of the (unmarried) workers are working without a permit. In 10% of these families, at least two members work in a settlement, often father and son⁸⁷.

In addition, 8% of workers are women and the overwhelming majority of them work in greenhouses or packing houses in the Jordan Valley as they are reputed to be more delicate and patient than men. Approximately 10% of agricultural workers in the settlements are underage (from 14 years old) and they are paid about 20% less⁸⁸.



23 Palestinian worker in the Mehola settlement in the Jordan Valley - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

The most emblematic area of agricultural work in the settlements is the Jordan Valley, insofar as almost all of the 20 settlements located there are agricultural and huge. It is estimated that 10,000 Palestinian workers work in the valley permanently and up to 20,000 work there during the main harvests of dates and grapes. The vast majority of workers in settlements are seasonal workers. Moreover, even those who theoretically work all year do not work every day, especially depending on the weather. Similarly, none of these workers has a written contract and only the minority – usually those that work in station packaging – have a permit to enter the settlement. So the non-working days are not paid, not to mention the nonexistence of classic rights such as health insurance or retirement⁸⁹.

The vast majority of workers work without any kind of protection in dangerous conditions, either massive exposure to many chemicals, or

⁸⁶ *Employment of Palestinians in Israel and the Settlements: Restrictive Policies and Abuse of Rights*, August 2012, Kav Laoved (non-published).

⁸⁷ *Child laborers in Israeli agricultural settlements in the Jordan Valley, Palestine* (Vidéo). 2010 Ma'an report on agricultural migrant workers in the Israeli settlements of the Jordan Valley (translated from Arabic). Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014. Field observations.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* PCBS.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* *Abuse of Palestinian Workers* (Video), Who Profits? 25/11/2009.

pollination of palm trees 30 meters off the ground. Agricultural workers usually start around 6 or 7 AM and work until early- or mid-afternoon, depending on the season. On average, laborers work an extra half hour every day and up to 2 and a half extra hours, especially during harvests and in packing stations. The majority of workers work on a daily wage system for an average daily wage of NIS 62, which is less than half the legal minimum wage. A minority is paid by the hour, receiving NIS 8 per hour and 10 per overtime hour (so, 64 NIS per day). It is not the workers who choose the wage system, but intermediaries who hire them⁹⁰.



24 Al Hamra checkpoint, it is 6 AM during the harvest season: the last workers' buses arrive, heading to the settlements in the Jordan Valley - Andrew Beale - 08/2013

The majority of workers come from the Tubas, Nablus and Jericho governorates since the Jordan Valley and its settlements are spread over these three regions. This means that the majority of them spend a minimum of 2 hours on the road every day, especially when they come from the north because they must cross the Al Hamra or Tayasir checkpoints. Indeed, especially during the harvest period, depending on the

crowd and the will of soldiers, workers can be retained for more than 1.5 hours at the checkpoint. In addition, this increases transportation costs because all of them work via intermediaries.

Ironically, at least 11% of Palestinian workers working in the settlements work on land that originally belonged to their family or relatives⁹¹. The overwhelming majority of agricultural workers in settlements say they would prefer to work on their own farms. In agriculture, about half of the workers also have land they cultivate on a permanent or temporary basis, but their income from this does not allow them to live and meet the needs of their families. This is even truer for farmers and Bedouins of the Jordan Valley who suffer greatly from the restrictions on access to water, land and circulation. Indeed, the Valley is traversed from north to south by Highway 90 which Palestinians don't have the right to cross from 7 AM to 7 PM. In fact, most of the workers from the Valley have worked in the settlements more or less constantly since their adolescence, through the intermediaries of the region⁹².



25 Highway 90 and greenhouses of the Mekhora settlement in the Jordan Valley - Guillaume de Crop - 10/2012

⁹⁰ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014. Field observations. 2010 Ma'an report on agricultural migrant workers in the Israeli settlements of the Jordan Valley (translated from Arabic).

⁹¹ *Palestinian Wage Workers in Israeli Settlements in the West Bank –Characteristics and Work circumstances*, Majid Sbeih, The Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, 2011 (non-published).

⁹² Interviews with peasants and actors 2013. Field observations.

2.3. The scourge of intermediation⁹³

The system of intermediation is widely practiced in Palestinian labor, both in the settlements and in the '48 territories, specifically in the sectors of construction, industry and agriculture. However, in agriculture, intermediation is the rule. This means that workers are never directly in touch with their Israeli boss, but are hired through intermediaries, Palestinian themselves, who act as recruiters and HR managers on behalf of the settler-employer.

Most of the time, the intermediary is originally a worker who, because of his seniority, eventually gains the trust of the boss and receives a kind of promotion (which he asks for most of the time). However, some intermediaries rent their services to several Israeli employers depending on the work available. Concretely, the intermediary hires laborers for the day, transports them from their home to their place of work, counts the worked hours for each worker and distributes payments.

Initially, intermediation shows several problems of principle. First, the system of intermediation is completely unofficial and the intermediary is not legally responsible. Apart from the fact that there are never written work contracts in agriculture, even if there were, the intermediary wouldn't appear anywhere. On the other hand, workers have no direct relationship with the boss. Sometimes they don't even know his name, especially during the harvests, when many don't even know in which settlement they're going to work after leaving their homes at dawn.

Furthermore, all interviewees denounced the blatant and outrageous dishonesty of the overwhelming majority of intermediaries. It is also common knowledge that among them are many informants working with Israeli intelligence services. In some cases, there is a clear collusion between the Israeli and the intermediary and against the workers. For example, it happens that even though the true owner of a factory is Israeli, on paper the owner is the Palestinian intermediary who supposedly employs both Israelis and Palestinians working there. In fact, if the boss is Palestinian, it is the Palestinian labor law that applies and not the Israeli labor law. Despite its problems, the Israeli one is still much better for the workers.

All involved report cheating of the intermediaries in counting days and hours of work, wage distribution and abusive cuts in their wages for all kinds of expenses. Indeed, if a Palestinian worker gets an insufficient salary for the number of hours he worked or simply according to the law, he has no means of recourse. Intermediaries often give the pretext that it is the Israeli boss who did not give them the full amount equal to the wages of the workers he is responsible for. Indeed, it is a reality: Israeli bosses *never* give the required NIS 150 for each eight-hour work day for each worker. But it is also true that the intermediaries happily help themselves from the sums paid by the settlers. In addition, transportation costs are charged to workers, ranging from NIS 5 to 30 per day, per worker, depending on the distance traveled and this is income in itself for intermediaries.

⁹³ Ibid.

Moreover, competition among intermediaries reverberates on the workers. If an intermediary transmits the Israeli boss a request to increase workers' wages, the boss will always find another intermediary who will provide him with a cheaper and more pliable labor force. In fact, the vast majority of intermediaries, far from claiming the respect of the rights of "their workers" thus organize competition between the workers who have no other alternative to this work anyway.

In addition, it is particularly common in agriculture that intermediaries prefer to hire children (from 12 years old) because the younger laborers are, the more willing they are to work without protection and the less regard they have for the risks (handling chemicals, working in trees without protection...) and the less they know their rights. Moreover, child laborers often come from very poor families who need this income and the fact that they drop out of school makes them especially socially vulnerable individuals in the long term.

In fact, throughout the year, there are more people applying for work in the settlements than available work. Therefore intermediaries are in a position to impose their rules, whether low wages, travel expenses or even sexual favors when it comes to women. Finally, regarding intermediaries placing Palestinian workers inside Israel, the Palestinian workers all say that '48 Palestinians are far more dishonest than Israeli Jews.

2.4. What the law says⁹⁴

Theoretically, workers who work in the settlements are subject to Israeli labor law. In 2006, the Israeli High Court of Justice imposed a salary of NIS 150 per day and 20 per extra hour for Palestinian workers in agricultural settlements. In addition, *theoretically*, the settlements being territories under Israeli administration, Palestinians must apply to the labor office of the regional Israeli Civil Administration for permits to enter the settlements. Apart from exceptions (packing houses and some intermediaries), no agricultural worker has a permit. In fact, if a dispute arises, without a permit to enter the settlement, a settler may call the army to evict a worker without the possibility of coming back to claim his wages.

The PA having no jurisdiction over the settlements, litigation must be processed by Israeli courts, which poses physical problems since Palestinians cannot enter Israel. Moreover, workers must file their complaint with the Israeli Civil Administration, which is a violent and arbitrary body of the army that may decide to imprison them immediately if they do. Furthermore, legal proceedings are lengthy and expensive, even with the support of trade unions or NGOs. In addition, the protesters lose their jobs immediately and as a result of word-of-mouth between the army, settlers and intermediaries, it will be very difficult for them to find another job, even in another settlement. Finally, although the Israeli courts accept the fact that three months of continuous employment in a settlement automatically qualifies a

⁹⁴ Ibid.

worker for a contract, in practice, it is rare that the worker can prove he has worked there, especially due to non-cooperation of intermediaries.

Concerning the frequent and sometimes fatal work accidents, employers are required to provide the necessary medical care to injured workers. They must transport them to the nearest Israeli hospital and pay for all costs incurred by the accident, regardless of the duration of treatment. In practice, they mostly get rid of the injured at the nearest checkpoint and the worker is treated at his own expense in a Palestinian hospital. Families cannot afford quality health care, especially given the interruption of work of the injured party, depriving families of an indispensable income. At best, the settler proposes to hire his brother.

To conclude, in the agricultural settlements of the West Bank, the already-discriminatory labor law is ignored by all. The *fait accompli* in which Palestinian farmers are stuck becoming wage laborers is maintained by military terror on the one hand and scavenger intermediaries on the other. Agricultural settlements are lawless areas completely beyond any public control. They are beyond control of the PA because it does not have any rights over them and beyond control of the Civil Administration, because it is not there to protect Palestinians. In addition, the security ideology and the game of borders help to keep the majority of the workers illegal and so remove them from the protection of the law.

3. The case of Syrian workers of the Golan Heights⁹⁵

The Golan Heights is a Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, like the West Bank and Gaza. There too, more than 131,000 inhabitants were expelled (about 95% of the inhabitants of the plateau), the entire Golan Heights has been declared a "military area" by the Israeli army and Syrian properties were confiscated en masse by the Zionist state. The Golan Heights was eventually annexed by Israel in 1981. Many Syrians have therefore lost up to half of their agricultural land, agriculture and especially livestock being the main economic sector. The colonized areas that were not sown with land mines have been replaced by colonial intensive agriculture. Moreover, to date, only settlers' plots have been cleared. Bedouins have gone to swell the number of refugees in the suburbs of Damascus and the colonized Syrian peasants planted the remaining land with fruit trees, mainly apple trees.

Moreover, Israel collects about a third of its water consumption and 53% of its drinking water in the Golan lands. As in the occupied Palestinian territories, the army controls all water resources of the Heights and the settlers are largely advantaged in terms of prices and quantities. Rainwater reservoirs built at their own expense by farmers to circumvent the restrictions were prohibited and partially destroyed by the army in 1985. For those who remained, the occupation authorities decreed that rainwater was also Israeli and consequently, farmers had to pay taxes on the volume harvested.

⁹⁵ *From Settlement to Shelf: The Economic Occupation of the Syrian Golan*, Al-Marsad – The Arab Center for Human Rights in the Golan, December 2009. Interviews with peasants and actors 2013. Field observations.

Today, even though, unlike Palestinians, the Golan's Syrians can move throughout the '48 territories without crossing checkpoints, the local economy has been largely stifled. Part of the farmers and agricultural laborers were converted to tourism: since the Golan is not considered by Israelis as an occupied territory, it is one of their most popular tourist destinations. In winter, many tourists flock to enjoy the ski resort of Majdal Shams. It is also a supplementary income for many Syrian workers who work in massive numbers of agricultural and industrial settlements.

Following the near-destruction of the agricultural sector, the vast majority of inhabitants work in the settlements or elsewhere in Israel in the industrial, construction and agriculture sectors. People prefer to work in agriculture rather than in construction or elsewhere in the '48 territories, because they remain in the settlements of the region and can go home at night. Like the Palestinians, they would all prefer to be working on their own farms and half of them have land that is not enough to support their family when faced with colonial agriculture.

At least half of the workers are women who suffer from wage discrimination compared to men, even if it is difficult to assess. Although it varies from one settlement to another, workers generally have employment contracts, earn at least 180 NIS per day, or 3800 NIS per month, with medical coverage and pension contributions. The people we met complained of difficult working conditions, but the pressure and the solidarity of the small Golan communities eventually achieved the enforcement of labor law two years ago. Syrian Golanis and people of "undetermined"⁹⁶ nationality therefore enjoy the same contracts as Jewish Israelis. There is no child labor and workers generally work 5 to 6 hours per day, which leaves them time to take care of their own land in the event that they still have some. Finally, the standard of living of Golanis, even agricultural workers and peasants, is much higher than that of the Palestinian occupied territories. Although the situation is not ideal, food insecurity and poverty are not relevant notions in the Golan Heights.

⁹⁶ Syrians who were born in the Golan after the military occupation have identity documents indicating: "Nationality: undetermined." Syria doesn't recognize Israel and therefore doesn't accept the laissez-passer the Israeli authorities issue for Golanis when they want to go to Syria. Thus, with the exception of students admitted to Damascus University, Golanis cannot go back and forth or obtain Syrian citizenship. Indeed, Israel and Syria are separated by miles of demilitarized no-man's land, *theoretically* only accessible to the UN's blue helmets, who also oversee civilian crossings. Finally, even though they now can apply for Israeli citizenship, Golanis massively refuse it. Only 3% accepted it and they mostly serve in the occupation army in Palestine. The movie "*The Syrian Bride*," shot in Majdal Shams, gives a clear picture of the complicated situation of the Golan's residents.

PART 4:

PERSPECTIVES

AND ACTORS IN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENSE

1.A bleak future

In this situation, farmers, citizens, unions and NGOs are not particularly optimistic about the future. The resumption of negotiations between the Israeli government and the PA under the aegis of the American Secretary of State is perceived only as a diversion, a political farce aiming to distract the attention of the people to allow Israel to legalize its brutal policy. The Palestinian negotiating teams themselves even resigned from their position twice in 2013, given the conditions imposed by Israel and its ally.

Israel imposed, for example, the firm recognition of the exclusive *Jewishness of Israel*, the "land swaps" without or almost without compensation⁹⁷ to maintain settlements adjacent to the 1967 borders and to get rid of its Arab citizens⁹⁸ and military presence and border control for at least 10 years after the signing of the agreement⁹⁹.

In addition, the Zionist state is still issuing building permits for the construction of thousands of additional housing units for settlers in West Bank¹⁰⁰, the regular invasions of the esplanade of the Al Aqsa mosque by settlers and the army continue¹⁰¹ and killings and attacks against Palestinians do not decrease¹⁰². Meanwhile, the settlers' organizations are increasingly powerful and extremist to the point of attacking the Israeli army itself. The Israeli government claims to have difficulties controlling them, but it is doubtful that they're actually putting efforts in this direction. Consequently, in the image of the "Price-tag" campaign, outbursts of violence against Palestinian civilians are more virulent and organized¹⁰³.

⁹⁷ Interviews with actors 2013, 2014. Peace Now, interview 2013: *"I know the idea of land swaps is a good solution to help Israel to annex a little of the West Bank... So instead of evacuating 340,000 settlers, we (Israelis) will only evacuate 150,000 and we will take these pieces of land off the future Palestine... They (the Israeli government) wanted to give less in return... 4 or 5%... listen, even if Israel annexes Ariel and gives all its equivalent in land, it is still problematic."*

⁹⁸ *Israel 'proposes land swap' as part of peace deal with Palestinians*, Robert Tait, The Telegraph, 01/01/2014.

⁹⁹ *U.S. plan keeps Israeli army in Jordan Valley for 10 years*, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, 10/12/2013.

¹⁰⁰ *PA: Israeli settlement plans "destructive" for peace process*, Ma'an News Agency, 30/10/2013.

¹⁰¹ *Israeli settlers invade yards of Al-Aqsa Mosque*, International Middle East Media Center, 03/12/2013.

¹⁰² *Palestinians lay to rest man killed by Israeli forces*, Ma'an News Agency, 31/01/2014.

¹⁰³ *"Price Tag" Escalation Timeline: Jan 1, 2011-present*, Peace Now, 15/01/2014. "Price tag" is a campaign of blind violent actions perpetrated by young extremist settlers. This campaign aims to systematically make the Palestinian population pay for all the actions taken against colonization, wherever they come from. Thus, for example, when an outpost is evacuated by the Israeli army, these terrorists attack Palestinians, their homes and their fields, as well as, to a lesser extent, Israeli anti-colonialist organizations and the army itself.

In addition, a project of outright annexation of the Jordan Valley (30% of the West Bank's territory) is currently under debate. The Israeli Prime Minister has also announced plans to begin the construction of another wall around the valley right after the completion of the construction of the southern border fence¹⁰⁴.

Although hope is required, the future is bleak. Nothing seems to stop the Israeli war machine, certainly not the international community or the Arab states that still have the ability to do so. All Palestinian interlocutors are forced to acknowledge the failure of the Palestinian people on the political level. The right of return of refugees, guaranteed by UN international conventions, was sacrificed by the PA itself¹⁰⁵ and angry rumblings in refugee camps for months were violently repressed¹⁰⁶.

In this situation, it is civil society that gives a little hope. Citizens, NGOs, unions, associations and collectives are numerous and if they regret the apathy of the people, they seem to take things in hand on the ground. Indeed, they took note of the disengagement of the PA and in the best case, they describe their relationship with it as "*a marriage without love. When coordination is required, we do it and when it is not, no, because we have totally different political visions.*"



26 Demonstration and violent clashes between protestors and PA police near the Jalazone refugee camps following the prolonged strike of UNRWA personnel - Abbas Momani, AFP - 12/01/2014

¹⁰⁴ Jordan Valley fence would finalize the West Bank's complete enclosure, Haggai Matar, +972, 04/11/2013.

¹⁰⁵ In August 2013, Mahmoud Abbas declared that the Palestinians "will not ask to return to Jaffa, Acre or Haifa in the future." On 16/02/2014, he added that it was out of the question to "drown Israel with millions of refugees and to change its nature."

¹⁰⁶ UN strike paralyzes West Bank refugee camps, Dalia Hatuqa, Al Jazeera, 15/01/2013.

2. Unionism and institutions

2.1. Palestinian unionism¹⁰⁷

2.1.1. Historic and institutional unionism

Unions are rather powerless to fight for the rights of workers, particularly because the ability of unions to influence political decisions and social movements largely faded. Indeed, the first Intifada was marked by massive strikes called, followed and supported by unions first, then by political parties. All agree that it is this mobilization of grassroots workers whatever their age, gender or working sector, which made the social movement successful. Workers and their organizations were clearly participating in politics. Indeed, it is common to hear that everything that was won during the first Intifada was lost during the second. The choice of armed struggle was made by the political factions and party establishments, without the mass support of the people. This was a turning point in which the strictly political factions have taken over the grassroots movements, embodied – among other things – by unions.

In addition, the unionization of workers has declined sharply in recent years and settlement workers are the most vulnerable. 93% of them aren't members of any union or workers' association¹⁰⁸. This can be explained by several factors. The first is the development of civil society in the form of NGOs because of their greater ability to capture international donor money, used to implement concrete projects on the ground. On the other hand, NGOs have employed staff in greater numbers than unions. This led to a general change in attitudes towards the remuneration of activist work. Thus, the involvement of the workers' base faded in a context of professionalization of the sector. In addition, NGOs partially substituted themselves for the unions by maintaining a lobbying mission towards the Palestinian National Authorities.

In parallel, the history of Palestinian unionism has been very eventful. In a context of occupation and need for legitimation of a leader who could speak internationally on behalf of the Palestinian people, unions and political parties often got confused in their missions. Thus, major political parties like Fatah blithely placed their supporters at the head of unions without worrying about internal democratic processes. Many unionists, usually from the left and extreme-left, denounce these abuses that led the parties to infiltrate unions to better control them, regardless of the interests of workers. Indeed, a strong union base would have constituted a threat to governing parties with very little legitimacy among the people. Until today, the most important unions in terms of geographic presence and funding are linked to the authorities, co-managing the union with them, and they are poorly considered by workers. This causes a general distrust and disregard for unions.

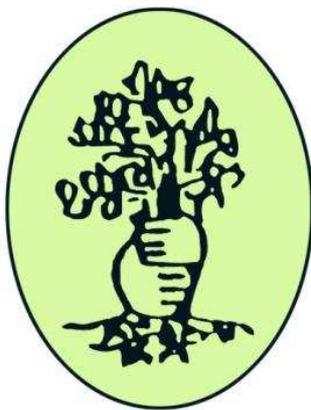
¹⁰⁷ Interviews with peasants and actors 2013, 2014. Field observations.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. *Palestinian Wage Workers in Israeli Settlements in the West Bank – Characteristics and Work circumstances*, Majid Sbeih, The Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, 2011 (non-published).

Thus, as in Israel, there is a main federation of trade unions in Palestine: the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). Palestinians working in the '48 territories with an employment contract automatically contribute up to a hundred shekels to it, as they automatically contribute to the Histadrut. This follows an agreement between the two trade union federations to split and share the contributions of workers from the occupied territories. Palestinians working in Palestine also contribute automatically to the majority union. This institution is politically linked to Fatah, the party of the current PA.

2.1.2. Union renewal

Faced with this situation, in the past ten years, the union landscape began to renew itself. These regenerated unions clearly denounce the collaboration of the central union, not only with the neoliberal policies of the PA, but also with Israeli institutions.



27 PFU logo

One can, for example, note the reversal of the Palestinian Farmers' Union (PFU), which dropped its NGO work (and associated funding) to focus on union activity itself. It follows a logic of complete independence from political parties, in opposition to neoliberal policies implemented by the PA and it supports the boycott of Israel, although it is not a member of BDS. Its action is based on practical experience. For example, in 2008, Hamas closed its borders to the imports of peaches, apricots and bananas, which has resulted in a shortfall of about NIS 500,000 in a season for Israel. Thus, the PFU is trying to push the PA to do the same for agricultural products of the West Bank instead of promoting import for the customs duties it brings. It also supports the development of a seed market with regulated prices and fights against the introduction of GM seeds¹⁰⁹.

More generally, the PFU tries to push the authorities to enforce the laws they enacted themselves, including reimbursement for inputs for farmers and the democratic consolidation of institutions through the restoration of a Legislative Council.

One can also note the long-term work provided by extreme-left unionists to bring together the most vulnerable workers, regardless of their profession or region. More and more workers find confidence in unions and seek to reconstruct a system based on human solidarity and not on the monetary system.

¹⁰⁹ GM: Genetically modified (Organism). It can be vegetal or animal and consists in modifying living organism's genomes through various technics. GMOs are opposed by countless peasants and citizens' organizations, especially because of the dependency they create for farmers towards the multinational companies that produce them, but also because of their consequences on the environment, biodiversity and health. Israel, where GMOs have been commercialized for over 10 years, is one of the precursor countries for GMO development. Therefore, Israeli exports contain GMOs.



28 GUWAFIA logo

In the General Union of Workers Associations in the Food Industry and Agriculture (GUWAFIA), contributions are 3 NIS per month. Although GUWAFIA was only officially registered very recently, its work in terms of launching and supporting strikes, specifically of workers in the northern industrial settlements, resulted in victories. The working conditions in these settlements are still not desirable, but these mobilizations led by example to get rid of intermediaries, to obtain payment of wages in accordance with the law, and to get basic protections from exposure to chemicals.

Another example: when the workers of a colonial chemical plant in Tulkarem went on strike for six months, despite the availability of funds, the central trade union did not deign to come to their aid. Thus, unionists of this small union have vouched personally with stores, electricity companies, landlords and other hairdressers for the payment of workers' claims. Without this, the workers would have been forced to return to work without getting their rights and still unable to feed their families. More broadly, the GUWAFIA focuses on the union training of workers and advocates for the establishment of labor courts.

Moreover, they all emphasize the specificity of the agricultural sector. Organizing workers is easier and more natural in industry because workers are less numerous, always work in the same place and the conditions to enter the settlements are more stringent. In agriculture, laborers are working seasonally, in remote areas, and the sector is plagued by intermediation which organizes the competition between the workers while the unskilled nature of this work makes workers by definition easily replaceable. This is why unions are calling for sanitizing themselves of political links and corruption and for union training of workers in this sector as a priority.

2.2. A problematic institutional vacuum: no Legislative Council and no Labor Court¹¹⁰

Unionists denounced the difficulty of practicing their activity and achieving concrete results given that Palestinian institutions have not adapted. They also insist on the fact that this is not related to the Israeli occupation, but to the lack of political will of the Palestinian leadership to protect workers.

At the legislative level, the Parliament (or Legislative Council) was dissolved by the President of the PA in 2006 following the Hamas victory in the elections. Therefore, one cannot really talk about a democratic legislative process insofar as bills emanating from ministers' offices are validated unilaterally by the President's office.

Consequently, the participation of civil society – specifically unions – in the decision-making process remains dependent on the goodwill of officials in charge at any given time. It also often happens that

¹¹⁰ Interviews with farmers and actors. Field observations.

they are informed after a law has already been ratified by the President's office and then have to traverse an obstacle course to get a rereading, a modification and final validation.

On the other hand, unions denounce the lack of labor courts. Indeed, there is now a Palestinian Labor Law, but no way to actually enforce it. For instance, when there is litigation between Palestinian workers and their bosses, the workers are very reluctant to bring cases to court due to ignorance of their rights and for fear of not finding another job. When they do bring cases to court, often supported by unions, the proceedings can last dozens of years.

From this point of view, the situation has deteriorated since the cancelation of the Jordanian labor law that was previously applied in Palestine, which mandated that cases related to labor be heard within 3 months following their registration in court. In Israeli labor law, in addition to the presence of social security that allows plaintiffs to survive for the duration of the trial (only three months when they're Palestinian), the compensation requested by the workers increases each week, prompting employers to accelerate conflict resolution. However, under current Palestinian law, there is no such clause, nor an increase in compensation.

For example, sixty workers who had petitioned the court for 1,000 NIS per person for non-payment of wages in 1991 will never get their due because the accused boss died. Examples like this are innumerable.

These examples are not related to the occupation but to internal governance issues including the opacity and unwillingness of the PA. They greatly contribute to penalizing workers over the long term and setting up these institutional organisms is indispensable to improve workers' dignity and, more generally, to improve democracy.

3. Palestinian civil society

3.1. Agricultural development NGOs: the example of UAWC¹¹¹



Projects by agricultural development organizations can maintain farmers on their land. Between humanitarian and development approaches, at best, they improve their daily lives and at worst, merely help them survive.

For example, UAWC oversees the compensation granted to farmers for damage caused by natural disasters, in partnership with donors. Around Hebron, UAWC builds agricultural roads to open up and allow movement of the rural population and goods. In the Jordan Valley, UAWC builds plantations,

¹¹¹ Ibid.

irrigation networks and water reservoirs for collective use with fish that fertilize the irrigation waters and bring some food diversity. UAWC created a seed bank to provide farmers with local seeds for free or at reduced prices.

It has also created branches whose mission is to promote the marketing of Palestinian products for export, specifically oil and olive products to raise the price of these products on the market. As a member of BDS, it is also very involved in the reception of foreign delegations from all around the world, eager to explain the reality of the situation. Since its recent accession to Via Campesina, UAWC is attempting to contact its Thai partners to defend the rights of all land laborers. The organization also maintains a union type of activity because it is very involved in lobbying the government and contributes to trying to curb the disastrous agricultural policies implemented in recent years.

Furthermore, UAWC refuses conditional funds in order to keep decision-making power over its own projects. It is composed of numerous local committees throughout the entire territory and the decision-making process is far from that of conventional NGOs, since it is the peasants who determine the priorities of the organization. In addition, UAWC employees have strong personal ties with farmers. They are often on the ground and are all activists themselves. As proof of this, the seed laboratory in Hebron was attacked more than once by the Israeli army and several employees were arrested one or more times. To quote one of them: *"If the Israelis attack us, it means we disturb them and if we disturb them, that means that we're doing a good job."*

3.2. Flourishing associations and NGOs¹¹²

Palestinian civil society is extremely rich and active. Here are a few examples of the many organizations we have had the opportunity to meet during this study.

The PHG is involved in the thorny issue of water: it sets up networks for rainwater harvesting, cultivations to filter polluted waters, it repairs pipelines and rehabilitates the most wells possible without permission. ARIJ and LRC continue to provide valuable data to all stakeholders through their multidisciplinary research, especially in terms of land reclamation for agricultural use. On the ground, hundreds of cooperatives and other women's associations continue to struggle daily to live with dignity in a difficult situation.

The PSCC, composed of citizens from throughout Palestine, constantly continues to organize demonstrations across the country. The now-famous Friday demonstrations allowed some villages to recover a few hectares of land or a well. More recently, to protest against the project of annexation of the Jordan Valley,



29 Handala, a creation of Naji Al Ali, has become a kind of symbol of Palestinian resistance

¹¹² Ibid.

hundreds of activists reoccupied villages deserted during the war and brought them back to life, at least for a few days¹¹³.

More individually, Hosh Yasmine is a project of organic farming in Beit Jala, in area C, a few kilometers away from Bethlehem, that keeps growing. Its originality lies in having a restaurant, a campsite in the trees (to circumvent the building prohibition), employing only people from Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem along with international volunteers and it is the initiative of an urban artist. The collective dimension advertised by the owner is debatable, as is the reproducibility of the model, but this project shows that it is possible to design small-scale collective pockets of resistance and that agriculture is a promising future.

Internationally, the BDS¹¹⁴ campaign has achieved some victories. The campaign against Agrexco¹¹⁵ in France helped oust the Israeli agricultural products export company from ports in the South of France, despite its recent return under another name in the port of Seth. While all agree that BDS is more psychological than economic warfare, it also symbolizes international solidarity with the Palestinian people, precious to farmers and activists.

Although it is difficult to assess and qualify all the impacts of this rumbling civil society, it is clear that it concretely improves populations' daily lives, especially the agricultural and rural populations, and its intangible gains are innumerable. It embodies the hope and resilience of the Palestinian people as a whole and its diversity is in fighting on all fronts at the same time: colonization, apartheid, neoliberalism, patriarchy, ecocide, destruction of education and health, acculturation and memory loss, etc. Certainly, each of its initiatives has limits and none are a solution in themselves, but Palestinian civil society has proven its ability to unite and converge despite differences, at least enough to have a clear voice internationally.

3.3. Israeli organizations and cooperation¹¹⁶

It is not possible to rely on Israeli trade unions per se. Nevertheless, it seems that the organizations for defense of minorities may provide some light in the darkness. This is particularly true of organizations such as Adalah, Sawt El Amal, Kav LaOved and CWP (Who Profits?). Cooperation, particularly in terms of information exchange, is desirable and can bring a lot to all parties because of their different

¹¹³ "Melh Al Ard" campaign (The Salt of the Earth). *Temporarily taking back the Jordan Valley*, Dylan Collins, Al Jazeera, 07/02/2014.

¹¹⁴ BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions is an international political campaign initiated by 172 civil society organizations. It calls to put all kinds of pressures (economic, academic, cultural and political) on Israel to end the occupation. Since 2011, any person or organization that would call for BDS in Israel can be sued. At the funeral of Nelson Mandela (supporter of BDS), the PA President, Mahmoud Abbas gave the public a new opportunity to detest him, saying that "*Palestinians do not support the boycott of Israel, but that of the settlements, as they are illegal on Palestinian land.*"

¹¹⁵ Agrexco: Agricultural Export Company. The company exports fresh products of Israeli and colonial agriculture under the brand name of "Carmel." Since the bankruptcy of the company in 2011, following European citizens' protests, most of its activities were taken over by Mehadrin and Hadiklaim.

¹¹⁶ Interviews with peasants and actors 2012, 2013, 2014. Field observations.

perspectives in the field. However, if the links are obvious for some of them, they are more delicate with others. Indeed, the struggle for the defense of laborers cannot be limited to compliance with labor law. A Palestinian worker who works in a settlement cannot simply be content with the clauses of a work contract. The original struggle is first turned against colonization, to prevent the peasants from becoming workers in the service of those very people who oppress them.

Indeed, the decent Palestinian organizations are engaged in the fight against the normalization of Israel and its policies. Refusing normalization does not mean refusing to cooperate, but in asking for essential prerequisites. First, Palestinian and Israeli organizations of all kinds are not in symmetrical relations. It is not "a joint struggle for peace," but the addition of Israeli solidarity to the Palestinian national struggle against Israeli colonialism. Specifically, this requires support by Israeli civil society or political organizations for ending the colonial occupation, for the individual and national collective rights of Palestinian Israelis and for the right of return of Palestinian refugees. This cooperation should take place in the field of public action and not behind closed doors¹¹⁷.

However, apart from a few organizations, primarily those defending '48 Arab minorities, Israeli organizations remain quite cautious in their political speech. So, in fact, examples of regular and sustained cooperation remain quite limited and individualized.

¹¹⁷ *On normalization and anti-normalization*, Michel Warshawski, AIC, 12/01/2012.

CONCLUSION

In Palestine as elsewhere, it is very clear that all agricultural workers of industrial facilities are originally independent peasants, forced to abandon their farms. As elsewhere, they are victims of neoliberal economic and agricultural policies that favor industrial agriculture, undermining peasants and causing mass pauperization, sanitary scourges and environmental destruction. It's the same global dynamic that drives Thai peasants to go to work in Israel and those of Eastern Europe and Africa to emigrate to Europe at the risk of their lives. Everywhere, states implement agricultural and migration policies designed to keep these populations vulnerable, whether by the criminalization of their very presence or by organizing networks of human trafficking in origin and host countries.

However, Palestinian workers are treated as migrants in their own country. Israeli colonization continues to blight Palestinian land, despoiling water resources, destroying homes, expropriating land, imprisoning villagers, torturing children and murdering civilians. Israeli policy is fully engaged in the "shock doctrine," which participates in the loss of legitimacy, meaning and coherence of the Palestinian people as a whole by attacking it at its roots. The physical presence of the settlements and their activities constitute an ecocide, a veritable cornerstone of this strategy.

Israel is not a state like others. Created from scratch on the basis of a racist ideology, it is a bellicose colonial project that threatens all the peoples of the Middle East and the world, trying to force them to accept its war and genocidal logic. The State of Israel continues and intensifies its policies of ethnic cleansing and apartheid, both within its borders and in territories it has occupied for over 45 years now, with the support of the international community. Since 1948, the international community has continued to politically, economically and militarily support this criminal state and has charged Palestinians to pay for past crimes they did not commit. The international community cannot claim to work for peace as long as it does not take the side of justice by putting a stop to and bringing to justice war crimes and other violations of international law by Israeli leaders, soldiers and settlers.

As if international abandonment wasn't enough, the Palestinians themselves are forced to become the first architects of their oppressor. They are the ones who build the houses of the settlers, who cultivate their stolen fields and enrich them in disastrous working conditions to the detriment of their own lives. Palestinian laborers suffer the double violence of the imposition of their condition and of the intensive exploitation of Israeli settler-managers. Therefore, in the case of Palestine, agricultural workers' struggle surpasses the scope of labor law. The struggle of peasants and workers is primarily a struggle for the recognition of the existence, dignity and culture of the Palestinian people as a whole.

Despite the recognition of its structural, political and financial weakness, the PA's willful abdication of the goal of resisting the occupier and obtaining internationally recognized rights is clear and conclusive. Indeed, the development of "classic" agricultural neoliberal policies matches perfectly with the inhumane policies institutionalized by the State of Israel. The people feel sacrificed in the interests of a few and it is the peasants who pay the heaviest price, to the point of sometimes calling the PA a

"Vichy Government." The definition of long-term policy guidelines by NGOs has little effect, insofar as these guidelines do not cover all populations, and they are even more financially fragile. Furthermore, divergences of opinion between them are numerous both at the political and practical levels. If they have been successful in replacing the state in maintaining what remains of the peasantry, their action remains provisory and one of emergency, as they are not supported by their overarching institutions. Only a democratic, legitimate and representative state can tackle the challenge of political coherence, in accordance with the official national strategy of struggle against the occupiers.

Nevertheless, civil society has a role to play, in Palestine and in Israel and abroad. Unions and agricultural development organizations put farmers together, organize solidarity and concretely improve the situation of workers. This field-level approach, supported by an excellent knowledge of political and technical issues and real professionalism, makes Palestinian civil society a rich reservoir of diverse and complementary skills. In the '48 territories, civil society is more segmented but productive partnerships are possible. The perspective of Palestinians in '48 is also interesting insofar as it reflects another facet of the oppression of the state and can contribute to reflection on strategy. Although the physical and political separation of the peoples is a reality, this joint work is needed and requested on both sides. This is a challenge to address in this complex context and all are aware that even if hope remains, miracles are rare... even in the Holy Land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of occupation and endless colonization, the following recommendations do not claim to be able to significantly change the situation of Palestinian peasants and workers, in agriculture or elsewhere. However, we hope that they will contribute to put an end to illegal policies and to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable. They are not ranked in order of importance, but by type of stakeholders and actions. Finally, many of these recommendations are those made by those interviewed during the study, whether peasants, unionists or activists.

- **Continue lobbying Palestinian public institutions for the restoration and creation of state organisms, essential to the proper functioning of democracy and law enforcement.** Concretely, this involves the placement of Legislative Council representatives of all political trends democratically elected throughout Palestine. Moreover, given their legitimacy and expertise, it is necessary to systematize the consultation of all Palestinian unions and NGOs on the drafting of laws, in all sectors. These systems must be institutionalized to ensure that decision-making is primarily Palestinian. International organizations should maintain only a minor political role, despite their financial weight.

- **Continue union lobbying efforts for immediate establishment of labor courts with sufficient means to resolve cases in a reasonable timeframe.** Even if these courts will have little impact on labor in the settlements, we hope that they can limit the intermediation phenomenon. Moreover, although labor in Israel and the settlements comprises an important part of the workforce, the majority of workers are working for Palestinian employers. Therefore, the creation of a law enforcement body is essential for the elimination of exploitative practices in general by making workers less vulnerable.

- **Reaffirm as strongly as possible the importance of the agricultural sector and its laborers for Palestine at all levels — social, economic, developmental, political and cultural.** Farmers are the first physical barrier to colonization! Thus, they perform a double mission of public service: feeding and protecting each and every Palestinian. All peasants deserve to exist and stay on their lands because the whole society needs them. Attacks against small peasantry, pastoralism and their practices – where the problem is not the lack of technical expertise, but the political situation – must stop. These peasant agricultures are the reality for the overwhelming majority of Palestinian farmers and have unparalleled advantages in the fight against food insecurity, public health degradation, destruction of the environment and for sustainable resource management, employment and the maintenance of a rural network and a little bit of cultural sovereignty. Examples of the consequences of their disappearance in Europe or the USA are countless, providing a strong argument in favor of this advocacy. Peasant communities should be given priority in terms of public investment and access to basic services such as water, electricity, education and health.

- **Continue lobbying to enforce existing law.** Farmers should be reimbursed for the purchase of inputs and if the funds are not sufficient, they should be oriented primarily towards the most vulnerable farms and for crops produced for the local market.

- **Continue lobbying for the removal of laws that negatively impact the agricultural sector and its workers.** Concretely, it is essential to call for the immediate withdrawal of several laws implemented or in the process of negotiation. The obligation for farmers to pay income taxes when they have less than 4 hectares cultivated must be removed. The private insurance bill that will only increase the disparities between land laborers, must be cancelled in favor of a state insurance. Those who are most vulnerable must be given priority.

- **Continue lobbying for the protection of local agriculture from the dumping of imported products.** Concretely, this means closing the borders to Israeli agricultural products when they are also produced by Palestinian farmers. Certainly, it takes some dexterity and reactivity, as it should also avoid excessive inflation of prices of food products for the population. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector is one of those that absorbs the most variations in employment. A decent valorization of agricultural labor will reduce poverty and increase national production.

- **Continue lobbying for priority support of agricultural production for the local market.** If exportation is not to be banned, it should be limited to foodstuffs (no cut flowers!), produced in excess of the needs of the population and maintaining a remunerative price for farmers. Thus, exports should primarily (if not exclusively) be the products related to olive cultivation.

- **Faced with the difficulty of success through political lobbying and legal procedures, the organization of workers in a dynamic of civil-disobedience oriented social movements must be the core strategy of civil society.** Intensified efforts to unionize workers are essential to recreate the links of solidarity broken by opportunists like intermediaries and recreate hopes that seem lost for many. If the context of the first Intifada seems far away, the fact remains that only massive solidarity and hard-hitting movements can shake the oppressive powers on all sides.

- **Support workers in collective and individual struggles with concrete means, including financial ones.** Even if it falls within the role of the state to support workers claiming their rights, it is clear that civil society is probably more able to offer or administer systems of solidarity with workers on strike. One can imagine, for example, the establishment of collective funds paid for by the unions at the level of contributions and grants they receive. In this framework, it is important to obtain the participation of the State, even if it is symbolic, for its role is to ensure the subsistence of its citizens. Practically, the system of administration and triggering such funds must be the result of negotiations between unions.

- **Share and valorize the work of analysis and proposal emanating from civil society, such as land reclamation, to support employment, production and physical struggle against colonization and better use of water.** ARIJ and the LRC achieved an important goal of land classification for prioritized

reclamation, based on various criteria such as agricultural land quality, cost of reclamation, water resources and exposure to colonization. Regarding water, PHG presents concrete solutions to improve the availability of water resources, taking into account the qualitative aspect, the disparities between urban and rural areas, the prices and above all, the restrictions imposed by the occupier. This work (and many others!) is valuable and should serve as a guide to all the actors of civil society in their lobbying campaigns.

- **Develop and build a lasting link based on mutual information and exchange between Palestinian, Israeli and international workers' organizations.** It is essential to keep the specificity of the discourse of Palestinian farmers and workers vis-à-vis their specific context and to make it heard by the organizations clearly involved in the struggle against colonialism in Israel such as Sawt El Amal, Adalah, the Coalition of Women for Peace (Who Profits?) and to a lesser extent, Kav LaOved. Indeed, even if the normalized segregation of Israeli society separates them, workers and peasants suffer apartheid and exploitation whether they are Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, '48, or migrants. On the other hand, it is important to maintain links with farmers' organizations and workers around the world to promote mutual aid. Thus, collaboration with the Thai member of Via Campesina can help develop coordinated strategies for the benefit of workers and peasants in both countries. Finally, these contacts serve to broaden the training of farmers, workers, activists and unionists involved in the construction of social movements.

ANNEXES

Questions to agricultural workers

General information

- Name, age, family situation (children schooling and partner employment, location), geographical origins and social background, nationality and documents, place of residency, something special (surface, price, conditions?)
- Training, original profession, sources of income of the family and expenses?

Current situation and challenges: historical, administrative information, workflow, social and professional environment

- Current job? Since when ? (if season, 1st time ?), why ? (which alternative to this job ?), how did you end up working here ? Are you the one who found this job or is it someone else who sought for you to do it? Did you get incitations of any kind to quit your previous job or your country?
- Do you have a working contract, if yes, what are the conditions? What's the amount of your salary? Do you think that's enough? How many hours do you work per day and how many days a week? Do you benefit from any kind of social protection (health care, insurance, unemployment...)? Do you receive benefits in kind ?
- What tasks do you do? Have you been trained to do that? Do you have to use dangerous chemicals or items and do you work in hazardous conditions?
- How many colleagues do you have on your working site? Is there a difference between you and them in terms of contract, tasks, personal situation, or treatment? How would you define your relationship with your colleagues? Are the workers organized together, show solidarity, is there an organized syndical defense or a relation with a syndicate? Why and if yes, which one ?
- How would you define your relationship with your hierarchy?
- How are the other persons that you have to be around because of your professional activity (representatives of Palestinian or Israeli authority, associations, NGOs, suppliers, local residents, civils or militaries)? What are your relationships with those people?
- Can you describe a random working day from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed?
- Do you think your job is stable and lasting? Why? Do you think about changing job soon? What would you do instead? Why?

Improvement of the current situation and future vision

- What would be your priorities in terms of working conditions improvement? What are the improvements that could be implemented immediately? How would you do it?
- If you had the power to fundamentally change the situation, what would be your ideal of life?
- How do you see your future, that of your family, your country...? Have you ever thought about immigration?

Questions to owners and managers

General information

- Name, age, family situation (children schooling and partner employment, localization), geographical origins and social background, nationality and documents, place of residency, something special (surface, price, conditions?)
- Training, original profession, sources of income of the family and expenses?
- For how long have you been working in agriculture? Since when do you work here or own this farm? And how did you get it? Did you benefit from any kind of regulatory facilities, under agricultural installation subsidies for example or because of the area of the farm?

Your agricultural holding and operation

- Location, surface, topography, hydrography in the area?
- What are your productions? Can you describe your production system (technical routes)? Do you have a transformation activity?
- How do you sell your products? Intermediates, providers, integration, products' destination, price paid to the producer and opinion on this price, power of negotiation? Are you satisfied of this organization and of your income?
- Are you often present on the farm? To accomplish which tasks? Is there a family workforce, if so, how is it organized and paid for?
- How many employees do you have? Where do they come from, how did you contact them? What kind of employment contract do they have (if service company, is it a common practice? What are the pros and cons)? What are their qualifications? What tasks are assigned to them? How is the work organized? What are the problems with them? Are you satisfied?
- What other types of people do you have to deal with on your farm? What about the competitors? How would you describe your relationship with them?
- Is there any form of collective organization? Union, cooperative transformer / trade, fonction in local political or economic organizations?

Your projects for the future

- Expansion, specialization, diversification, termination... Why? How?
- What improvements can be made immediately at the farm level on the one hand, and at the agricultural policies level on the other? What should be done over a longer term? Why and how?
- How do you see your future in general, that of your family and loved ones due to the tense political situation in the region?

Questions to partner organizations and institutions

General information

- Organization, name, age, fonction, current activities and projects?
- About the organization: short presentation (history, claims and their control, size, geographic and operational scope, organization, successes and failures...)
- What are your partners, institutions and associations, here and abroad? Difficulties in this context?
- Do you know Via Campesina? What are your relationship and interest in this organization?

General information about agriculture

- What is the economic and social importance of agriculture in the country? What is the share of agriculture in GDP? What is the importance of this sector in the issue of unemployment (production or resorption) and what have been the trend of this in the past few years?
- Are there areas that are characterized by a greater preponderance of the sector or specialization of production or marketing? Why (resources, local culture)?
- What general trend in recent years in terms of production and number of farmers?
- Is the domestic production sufficient to guarantee food safety of Palestine? Why?
- How would you evaluate the level of food sovereignty in Palestine? Is this indicator used by institutions and main NGOs? What are the main obstacles to food sovereignty here?
- What is the dominant agricultural model? The average size of farms? Is there regional or production disparities if this criteria are relevant?
- What are for you, the major challenges and obstacles in the agricultural sector (political, social, economic and environmental)?
- What's the impact of Palestinian and Israeli agriculture on the environment, especially on water resources? What's the rate of organic agriculture in the whole production? What are the destinations of these products and does organic production influences the size of the farms? Could you describe the quality certification processes?
- What are the main productions in Palestine? In the settlements? What are the destinations of this products? If exportation, which countries and how are they labelled? What are the traceability mechanisms implemented? Who's in charge of the protocols?
- What proportion of the population lives only or mainly from agricultural income (production, transformation, sells)? What do you think are the most striking facts about employment in agriculture (age, gender, needs, seasons, migrations ...)?
- Are there initiatives for training people on agriculture or promoting this sector?
- How would you describe the agricultural policies? Especially water, land and sells policies? What are those conceived and/or implemented by the Palestinian Authority, Israel, the international community? How would you describe their implementation and what's your opinion on this? What are their goals? Do they focus on food safety or sovereignty?
- How to improve the situation (being utopist or realistic)?

Agricultural workers' issue

- What is your level of expertise on the subject? For Palestinians and migrants? Do you have any data on this phenomenon? How would you describe the trend of this phenomenon? Are there other organizations or institutions involved in that issue?
- How is the recruitment of laborers operated? Why do they work in the colonies? What are the advantages and disadvantages? Do you think that's their main source of income? They have an alternative to work in the colonies? Is that "socially acceptable" to work for the Israelis in Palestine? What is their standard of living?

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED¹¹⁸

AIC: Alternative Information Center. It is a Palestinian-Israeli NGO working in favor of equality and justice for Palestinians and Israelis. Created in 1984, it opposes the idea of normalization, defends the refugees' right of return and struggles against the idea of separation of the two peoples, for the benefit of a State of law for all. Jerusalem.

<http://www.alternativenews.org/english/>

***ARIJ:** Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem. <http://www.arij.org/>

Adalah: Legal Center for Arab minority rights in Israel. Tel Aviv. www.adalah.org/eng

Addameer: “conscience” in Arabic. Created in 1992, it is a Palestinian NGO defending human rights and specialized in documentation and support of Palestinian political prisoners detained in Israeli and Palestinian prisons. It especially provides free legal support to the detainees, documents compliance with procedures and demands an end to torture and prisoners' rights violations. Ramallah. <http://www.addameer.org/>

Al-Marsad – the Arab Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Golan: an NGO defending human rights. It was created in 2003 by a group of lawyers and other professionals in education, health, journalism, planning, engineering and human rights' activists. Majdal Shams, Golan. www.golan-marsad.org/

BIMKOM – Planners for Planning Rights: an Israeli NGO created in 1999 by planners and architects to defend human rights and democracy in the field of planning. Jerusalem. www.bimkom.org.il/eng/

CWP: Coalition of Women for Peace. It hosts and supports the project “Who Profits?” that is an essential part of the BDS campaign. It specifically publishes information about all the companies involved in the colonization and regularly releases reports on more specific issues, such as the agricultural sector or Palestinian workers in the settlements. Tel Aviv. <http://whoprofits.org>

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization (UN). Head of Program (Palestine). Ramallah. <http://www.fao.org/> (*FAO has a Webpage for Israel but not for Palestine*)

GUWAFIA: General Union of Workers Associations in the Food Industries and Agriculture. Tulkarem. <https://newunions.wordpress.com/>

Kav Laoved: Migrants' Hotline. Israeli NGO for migrant workers' rights. Tel Aviv. www.kavlaoved.org.il/en

LRC: Land Research Center. Hebron – Halhul. <http://www.lrcj.org/Eng/site.php>

***Ma'an Développement Center:** Ramallah. <http://www.maan-ctr.org/>

¹¹⁸ For various reasons, not all the organizations mentioned in this list have been met with directly. The organizations with which there were no interviews are preceded by a star (*).

Ministry of Agriculture, Deputy Minister. Ramallah. <http://www.moa.gov.ps/>

PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. www.pcbs.gov.ps

Peace Now: an Israeli association supporting a pacific existence between two States, Israeli and Palestinian. Opposed to the continuance of colonization, it does the rare work of monitoring and following the settlements' expansion. Tel Aviv. <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/>

PFU: Palestinian Farmer's Union. Ramallah. <http://www.pafu.ps/en>

PGFTU: Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions. Ramallah. www.pgftu.org/en

PHG: Palestinian Hydrology Group. Ramallah. <http://www.phg.org/>

PSCC: Popular Struggle Coordination Committee. Ramallah. <http://popularstruggle.org/>

***Sawt El Aamal**: "The workers' voice" in Arabic. It is a union defending Arab workers' rights, mainly '48 Palestinians. Nazareth. <http://arab-workers-union.org/en/>

UAWC: Union of Agricultural Workers' Committees. Ramallah. <http://uawc-pal.org>

Via Campesina: International movement of peasant organizations created in 1993 in Belgium. It brings together about 200 million farmers, women and men, small and medium-size peasants, landless peasants, rural youth and women, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers.... VC defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a means to promote social justice and dignity. It is clearly opposed to industrial agriculture and multinational companies that destroy people and the environment. Via Campesina comprises about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. It is an autonomous movement, multicultural and pluralist, with no political or economic affiliation. It now has seats in institutions such as the FAO or the UN Human Rights Council. <http://viacampesina.org/en/>

LIST OF SETTLEMENTS VISITED (and regions)

Almon (Ramallah)
Amona (Nablus)
Anatot (Ramallah)
Argaman (Jordan Valley)
Ariel (Salfit)
Ein Prat (Ramallah)
Geva Benyamin (Ramallah)
Gilgal (Jordan Valley)
Gitgit (Jordan Valley)
Gush Etzion (Bethlehem)
Har Brasha (Nablus)
Itamar 1, 2, 3, 4 (Nablus)
Karmel (Hebron)
Kida (Ramallah)
Mehola (Jordan Valley)
Mekhora (Jordan Valley)
Merom Golan (Golan)
Messua (Jordan Valley)
Na'ma Na'omi (Jordan Valley)
Nemrod (Golan)
Odem (Golan)
Qatzin (Golan)
Tura (Nablus)
Psagot (Ramallah)