

2023 Olive Oil Season

General Situation in the West Bank.

The political and security conditions in the West Bank have already been tense and in continuous escalations before 7th.October.2023. During the 20 months before the war on Gaza began, a new far-right wing Israeli government took over, causing more repression and theft of Palestinians' rights and freedoms, and during that time period, more than 470 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank and around 89 in the Gaza Strip.

During the past 2 years, the Israeli occupation ordered the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian houses, and supported hundreds of attacks by violent Israeli settlers that resulted in property damage and injuries among Palestinians. Besides that, the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land has been accelerating over the past few years.

This continuous Israeli repression and the Palestinian struggle under the occupation for 75 years caused the outburst of the circle of violence, and the ruthless Israeli bombing of Gaza which killed more than 13,000 Palestinians including 5500 children and resulted in a massive humanitarian catastrophe in the largest open-air prison.



Israeli settlers attacking Palestinian farmers with the support of the Israeli occupation forces.



Israeli Checkpoint

The Situation After October 7th.

Since the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza, more than 212 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank. The cities of the West Bank are also separated from each other with military checkpoints and restriction of movement between the different areas.

That has also coincided with **the 2023 olive harvest season**, making it difficult for some olive farmers to reach agricultural land near Israeli settlements which is a big threat to their lives because of the violent Israeli settlers who were especially mobilized after October 7th. As a result, the farmer Bilal Saleh was killed by Israeli settlers while he was picking olives in his village Al-Sawiyah near Nablus, many other farmers got attacked regularly and some Israeli settlers stole cultivations of olives in some areas. This also caused concerns because the Israeli side also didn't give farmers permits to reach their land behind the apartheid wall to pick their olives, which make around 20% - 40% of **some villages'** production.

The funeral of the martyr Bilal Saleh who was killed by Israeli settlers in his field of olive trees.



The farmer Bilal Saleh picking olives from his land in Al-Sawiyah village in Nablus Governorate.

Olive Sector in Palestine

Olive trees extend over an area of more than 900 km² of Palestinian land, and they produce about 33,000 tons in a good year, and in bad years around 7,000 to 10,000 tons of olive oil. There are around 13 million olive trees in Palestine; 2.5 million of which are not fruitful.

Since 1967, the Israeli occupation has destroyed over 800,000 olive trees, through uprooting and burning. According to a report by **the Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission**, the area of lands isolated by the apartheid wall, near the settlements, is estimated to be 7% of the total area of Palestinian lands planted with olive trees (which represents approximately 40 km² of olive trees), and their owners cannot access them except with a permit from the Israeli side. Therefore, the owners of those areas cannot reclaim their land and harvest it, in addition to being subjected to many cases of theft of olives or burning of olive trees. Those Israeli violations against the Palestinian olive sector cause a loss of approximately 1500 tons of olive oil, or around 10.5 million dollars annually.



Olive Oil 2023 Estimates

According to initial estimations, the 2023 olive harvest season was expected to produce 12,000 tons of olive oil this year; 10,000 in the West Bank, and 2,000 in the Gaza Strip. Whereas, last year's productivity amounted to 36,000 tons, knowing that the annual general rate is 22,500 tons.

Influence of the Current Political Situation on Olive Oil Productivity.

Since the 7th of October until today, the Israeli occupation has been preventing Palestinian farmers in the West Bank from picking their olives behind the apartheid wall and in the lands surrounding the Israeli settlements where hundreds of cases of daily Israeli assaults on Palestinian farmers have been monitored. That involves physical assault and shooting, which led to the martyrdom and injury of a number of farmers in their lands while they were picking their olives.

Given that 7% of Palestinian olive fields are behind the apartheid wall, around 2 km² of olive fields are close to Israeli settlements and bypass roads and 40 km² of olive fields in the Gaza Strip weren't harvested or were destroyed due to the Israeli aggression, the **total of the areas that were not harvested** so far is around 46 km² of olive trees, the production of which is estimated to be around **5,000 tons of olive oil**. That results in a loss of approximately 50 million dollars, not to mention the low productivity of olive oil for the current 2023 season.



Farmers waiting to enter their lands of olive trees behind the apartheid wall in Deir al-Ghusun village, Northern West Bank.

the Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission monitored 140 Israeli settler attacks during the first half of 2023, causing 8,340 olive trees to be uprooted, damaged, vandalized and poisoned. The attacks were focused on Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate, which was subjected to 35 attacks, followed by Nablus Governorate with 33 attacks, and Hebron Governorate with 24 attacks.



“We Are with You” Campaign

The Agricultural Development Association (PARC) is currently proceeding with the annual campaign “We are with You” which is a voluntary campaign that is annually organized by PARC in various sites in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It has been ongoing for 15 years and the main goal of the campaign is to support Palestinians in rural areas in olive picking during the olive harvest against the violations of the Israeli occupation and settlers. Local volunteers are the driving force behind the campaign as hundreds of them actively participate in olive picking during the season. Unfortunately, this year foreign volunteers couldn’t participate in this campaign due to the ongoing war.

Besides supporting farmers with olive harvest, PARC recently distributed ladders to farmers in villages around the West Bank, to help them pick their olive trees.

