

al-shabaka executive summary

PALESTINIAN FARMERS: A LAST STRONGHOLD OF RESISTANCE

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Palestinian Industrial Zones: The New Threat

Small-scale family farming represents the [last frontier of resistance](#) to a worldwide capital-driven political system that dilutes people's identities and strips them of their [food sovereignty](#) in order to ensure elite political and economic dominance of both human and natural resources.

A determined Israeli effort to "modernize" Palestinian farmers began in 1948 with the introduction of new seeds and methods that decreased their independence and prioritized quantity over quality in order to cater to the new Zionist project.

Palestinian farmers today are not only [threatened](#) by Israel's settler-colonization of their land, they are increasingly facing land confiscation by the Palestinian Authority in order to build industrial zones that it claims will help farmers and create job opportunities.

These zones are in fact helping to deprive the Palestinian economy of its transformative potential; expand Israel's territorial dominance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; increase Palestinians' dependency on Israel in both goods and labor markets; and displace small-scale family farming, which has been the sustaining power of the Palestinian people and culture for generations.

Farming Under Occupation and Encroaching Neoliberalism

Since 1967, Israel has drowned the Palestinian agricultural sector with chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; it has advocated for a system of mono cropping that has left farmers vulnerable to middlemen who dictate prices and crop varieties; and it has pushed the agricultural sector towards planting labor-intensive crops, which are produced in chemically heavy greenhouses using cheap labor.

The latest round of United States-brokered "peace" talks between the Palestine Liberation Organization/Palestinian Authority and Israel indicate that further horrors lie in wait for the Palestinian farmer.

US Secretary of State John Kerry's Palestine Economic Initiative adopts a traditional top down neoliberal development approach that proposes economic solutions for political problems. Under the

Palestine Economic Initiative, agriculture is one of eight “key sectors” singled out for development, mainly through industrial zones.

Who Profits? Not the Farmers in Jenin

In 2000, the PA expropriated 933 dunums (230.5 acres) in total for “public use” in order to build the [Jenin Industrial Zone](#). To do so, the Palestinian Authority has been pushing growers out of one area in particular – El-Roba’yat – through claims of eminent domain. This law allows the government to purchase land at compulsory low-prices for the “public good.”

Some farmers, however, are refusing to give up their source of livelihood for the creation of an industrial zone that will end their way of life and destroy their natural and economic resources. Around 20 of them filed a lawsuit against the Palestinian Authority challenging the claim that the land will be used for the public good.

Despite their efforts, in April of 2014, the farmers were served papers forcing them to accept compensation for their lands, which they had previously refused to sell.

From Jenin to Jericho

The Jericho Agricultural Industrial Park not only depends on collaboration between the colonizers and colonized, but the park itself is located in the fertile Jordan Valley, which Israel wants to control in any future Palestinian state. Given Israel’s keen interest in this area, many of the adjacent agricultural lands are controlled by Jewish settlements, which are [predicted](#) to be among the primary beneficiaries of the industrial park at the expense of Palestinian farmers.

Farmers are apprehensive because they believe that these industrial zones are not designed to produce anything. Rather, they will serve as packaging facilities for agribusiness produce from the settlements that are geared towards mass production. But their small family farms cannot support such massive industrial operations.

A Call to Civil Society

Palestinian farmers need strong advocates in defense of their rights against the policies of both Israel and the “state” of Palestine. As local actors with the most direct access to international organizations and donors that impact development policy in Palestine, Palestinian civil society and non-governmental organizations should help to:

- Secure support and resources so that farmers can bolster their fight to resist industrial zones.
- Open avenues for farmers to directly confront the Palestinian Authority themselves, including the Palestinian Authority’s judicial system that denies the rights of these farmers.
- Develop projects in coordination with community leaders to support farmers with alternative



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- infrastructure for greater production, local marketing, and local value chains.
- Organize a public communications campaign to expose the myth of the state-building project, which serves a global neoliberal agenda at the expense of the Palestinian farmer.

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