



The Reality of Israeli Settlement and Palestinian Displacement: A Documentary Account

Izvor: <https://minbarlive.com/videos/the-reality-of-israeli-settlement-and-palestinian-displacement-a-documentary-acc>

This documentary account examines Israeli settlement expansion in Palestinian territories, detailing settler violence, military occupation tactics, and the ongoing displacement of Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba. Through testimonies from refugee camps like Aida in Bethlehem, it documents how entire villages were depopulated and Palestinians confined to camps that were never meant to be permanent.

SAŽETAK

This documentary presents a detailed account of Israeli settlement practices in the Palestinian West Bank and the systematic displacement of Palestinians. The speaker describes how settlers, often recruited from abroad and armed by the Israeli government, conduct raids and intimidation campaigns against Palestinian villages with near-total impunity—with 95% of investigations into settler violence dismissed and no jail sentences ever handed down. The account traces the historical roots of Palestinian displacement to the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe), when approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly removed from their homes following Israel's declaration of statehood. The Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem exemplifies this ongoing displacement: established as a temporary UN facility, it now houses 5,000 people whose families still possess keys to destroyed homes from villages like Bayt Jibrin, which was completely depopulated and converted into an Israeli kibbutz. The speaker documents how the 2004 separation wall, military watchtowers, and sniper fire have created conditions of extreme vulnerability, including the account of a child shot by a sniper in his own home. Throughout, the testimony emphasizes how UN Resolution 194, which promised refugees safe return or compensation, remains unfulfilled after more than 77 years.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Israeli settlers in the Palestinian territories operate with dual military and civilian identities, conducting raids and intimidation campaigns that deliberately provoke reactions which are then used to justify military interventions and arrests.

Settler violence operates under a system of near-total impunity: 95% of investigations into settler violence are dismissed, and no Israeli settler has ever received a jail sentence for killing a Palestinian.

The 1948 Nakba resulted in the forced displacement of approximately 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, and refugee camps established as temporary UN facilities have become permanent settlements 77 years later.

Entire Palestinian villages—around 400 in total—were depopulated during the Nakba and subsequently renamed and converted into Israeli settlements inaccessible to Palestinians, with surviving families still holding keys to their destroyed homes.

The separation wall and military infrastructure, including watchtowers and sniper positions, have created conditions where even children in their own homes face lethal threat, with incidents treated as routine military training rather than prosecutable offenses.

UN Resolution 194, signed by Israel and promising refugees safe return or compensation, remains unfulfilled, leaving Palestinians in limbo within settlements that were never designed to be permanent.

The practice of Israeli settlement is funded by US tax dollars, creating international financial complicity in the colonization and displacement process.

ČLANAK

The Nature of Israeli Settlement in Palestinian Territories

An illegal settler within the Palestinian territories operates under a dual identity. By day, he may appear in a normal uniform, but at night he dons a soldier's uniform and conducts raids, searching houses and interrogating people. He is one among hundreds of thousands who have migrated from Israel or abroad to participate in the active colonization of Palestine's West Bank, which lies less than twenty miles east of the Gaza Strip. These settlers live in makeshift compounds and outpost settlements positioned above Palestinian villages, often populated by mostly teenagers who spend their time attacking, terrorizing, sometimes killing and burning the homes of Palestinians at all hours, driven by motivations of their own.

A settler is fundamentally a person who has decided to move to Palestine from the United States or any other part of the world, claiming privilege based on Jewish roots in their families. This practice is technically in violation of the 1967 agreement. The two-state solution that is frequently discussed in international news is, from the perspective of those affected on the ground, merely rhetoric that fails to address the reality of ongoing settlement expansion.

The Origins and Methods of Settler Violence

Most of these settlers are actually coming from abroad, crossing international borders to participate in what amounts to territorial annexation. While dangerous, documentation efforts have shown that the presence of cameras provides a degree of safety, as settlers and the Israeli Defense Forces protecting them prefer not to be filmed. This creates a documentary advantage for those attempting to expose these activities.

At present, settlers are thought to be brandishing firearms—likely handguns provided by the Israeli army at the direction of the country's Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, an outspoken religious supremacist who believes in the total annexation of historic Judea, as it was once called within the Kingdom of Israel over 2,700 years ago. After October 7th, Ben-Gvir authorized the release of larger numbers of high-caliber firearms, so virtually all adults in the West Bank qualified for machine guns. The result was that the region became awash with these weapons, thinly supervised at best.

Intimidation Tactics and False Arrests

Villagers describe a deliberate pattern: settlers conduct intimidation runs specifically designed to provoke a reaction. Taking the bait in any way could be fatal. When a reaction occurs—or is fabricated—the settler calls on the Israeli army, falsely claiming that people are attacking them, thereby complicating matters for the villagers and justifying military intervention and arrests.

Israeli soldiers who arrive shortly after are often outpost settlers themselves wearing different uniforms. This routine is fundamentally about clearing the area by any means necessary. The settlers have been given a broader license to kill than the Ku Klux Klan members who enacted racial terror in the American South after the Civil War. Remarkably, ninety-five percent of police investigations into settler violence are immediately dismissed, and not a single jail sentence has ever been handed down to an Israeli settler involved in the murder of a Palestinian.

Settlers operate with near-total impunity. They can raid property, seize animals, build structures, and do whatever they want without meaningful legal consequences. All of this, without exception, is funded by US tax dollars.

The Lajee Center and Palestinian Resilience

In Bethlehem, the Lajee Center represents Palestinian efforts to preserve culture and provide community services. Lajee is an Arabic word meaning refugee. The Center runs different programs and projects, including a circus school and boxing classes, offering young people alternatives and outlets in the midst of ongoing occupation.

The Nakba and the Creation of Refugee Camps

The Aida refugee camp, located in the West Bank, today houses approximately 5,000 people, half of whom are young people and children. Like all Palestinian refugee camps, Aida's story begins with the Nakba—the catastrophe of 1948, which Israelis call the War of Independence.

The Jewish state was declared on May 15th, 1948, the morning after British colonial administration withdrew. This followed a UN partition plan approved a year earlier by a vote of 33 to 13. Five Arab nations—Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and their Palestinian counterparts—launched attacks in response, but they were unsuccessful. Israel ultimately won the war, and as a means of collective punishment, they created the Nakba, forcing 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and onto places like the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Aida was initially established by the United Nations shortly after 1948. The camp itself was not meant to be permanent. Within the camp, twenty-seven names commemorate the villages from which families originally came. Many families still keep the keys to their destroyed homes, holding onto hope that one day they will return.

The Villages of the Nakba

Bayt Jibrin was just one of around 400 villages depopulated during the Nakba. Today, it has been completely renamed and converted into Beit Guvrin, an Israeli kibbutz—the Israeli version of a socialist commune—totally inaccessible to any Palestinian. For those whose families originated there, memories passed down through generations speak of the land they owned and the lives they lived as farmers before 1948.

Graffiti within the refugee camp tells the history of Palestinians: how they were living before 1948 as farmers, and how, when the catastrophe happened, they were moved to refugee camps and surrounded by an apartheid wall.

The Wall, Military Occupation, and Sniper Fire

The massive wall surrounding Aida was built in 2004 during the Second Intifada, a bloody conflict that took upwards of 5,000 lives. The Israelis claim Palestinians started it by targeting police in protests that turned violent. Palestinians generally place blame on the collapse of peace talks at the Camp David Summit in 2000 and a provocative

visit by Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem—the third holiest site in Islam, built on land called the Temple Mount, the number one holiest site in the Jewish faith.

After the wall was completed, more than seven military watchtowers were constructed along the road. Children have been killed from these towers. On November 10th, 2023, Muhammad, who was in his home in one of the buildings, was shot by a sniper from the watchtower in front of the camp. A live bullet struck his chest. He did nothing to provoke the shooting. He bled for ten minutes while his father decided to take him to the hospital by car. When the father drove down, another group of soldiers stopped the vehicle, removed the body, and arrested the father without providing any first aid to the child. They took him to a military base, and the Israeli commander later called the father to pick up his son. When they returned the body, they did not come with an ambulance—they came with a normal truck. The child was placed in a plastic bag, thrown on the ground, and the soldiers left. Such incidents are treated as nothing more than training for Israeli soldiers.

The Unfulfilled Promise of UN Resolution 194

Places like Aida were never supposed to be permanent. According to UN Resolution 194, which was signed by Israel, Nakba refugees would eventually be given safe passage back to their villages. Those who chose not to return would be given compensation in the form of a reparations package. However, that resolution remains only paper. After more than 77 years under colonization, nothing has changed.

#Palestinian displacement #Israeli settlement #Nakba (1948) #Military occupation
#Refugee camps #International law #Documentation and accountability