



Evicting Bedouin Encampments: Geostrategic Connections and Disconnections in Al-Aghwar (Palestine Rift Valley) After October 7

The Palestine Rift Valley together with the rugged terrain that stretches along the eastern slopes of the West Bank represent the widest environment for agriculture, pasturage, and seasonal migrations for Bedouin communities. The Israeli occupation regime has for many years adopted a policy of quiet annexation of this region. Thus, vast regions are declared to be state lands. Other areas are declared closed for military training purposes or so-called “firing ranges.” Yet other areas are declared to be nature reserves, and these areas are encircled with roads, checkpoints, and modern outposts for pasture and agriculture. The Palestinian presence is thus splintered into besieged pockets while the Israeli settlements and army barracks are gradually being connected to these outposts.^[1] Following October 7, 2023, this process gathered unprecedented speed and on two parallel levels: deliberate escalation of violent acts by the Israeli settlers, and the multiplication of Israeli government decrees and administrative measures that transform the facts on the ground into a new geostrategic configuration.

This policy paper strives to address these new facts on the ground imposed by the Israeli occupation regime through the forcible eviction of Bedouin communities and the resultant geographical consequences, together with what this signifies on the level of the geostrategic connection and disconnection in Al-Aghwar in particular and in the West Bank in general.

How did violence become an administrative instrumentality?

Violent attacks by settlers, protected by or with the participation of army units, plus mounting restrictions imposed on access to pasturage and sources of water, have reached unprecedented levels since October 7. All these measures accord with the definition in international law of an environment of eviction which naturally leads to rapid and mass emigration of these communities. International organizations have reported that the year 2024 was one that witnessed one of the highest rates of violent acts committed by Israeli settlers. These latter were not content with injury and damage done to these communities but proceeded to create model situations that makes life impossible in that region. It was further reported that the year 2025 maintained that same rate of violence, with hundreds of attacks on more than 200 communities, especially in Al-Aghwar but also in the Ramallah, Nablus and al-Khalil governorates (along the so-called Alon settlement corridor). Subsequent reports documented the emigration of tens of families in one week, having been subjected to attacks by Israeli pasturage outposts built recently right next to these communities.[2] Following October 7, the number of Israel outposts newly established from that date and until mid-2025 was more than seventy[3], becoming central instruments of expansion. Thus, a mere caravan or paddock quickly turns into a hub that dominates large areas of pasturage surrounding it, and commences daily acts of violence against Palestinian shepherds, preventing their access to water and pasture. In other words, these outposts have, in one form or another, turned into launching pads from which systematic attacks are carried out, driving the Bedouin communities away out of fear for their own safety and that of their flocks.[4] This pattern of behavior has been documented by several research and media reports and is seen as a tactic that has gathered speed as part of a larger strategy to effectively annex Palestinian agriculture and pasturage.[5]

Reports by official and legal organizations indicate that more than 33 Palestinian Bedouin communities have been evicted since October 7, and spread over 66 localities in the West Bank, and this has led to the forcible eviction of 2373 citizens belonging to these communities[6]. According to these reports, these evictions have allowed Israeli settlers to close off hundreds of thousands of *dunums* where these

communities had lived[7]. The Authority to Resist the Wall and Settlements documented some 3000 attacks by Israeli settlers in 2024, which directly targeted the property and land of Palestinian inhabitants and led to the martyrdom of 32 citizens, from October 7 and until the time of preparing this policy paper. Reports by this Authority indicated that the settlers had started some 450 fires, 70% of which targeted Bedouin communities and nearby villages.[8]

More salient examples of this violence include forcing families living on the eastern slopes to emigrate under pressure of ceaseless attacks plus the forcible eviction of the `Ayn Ayyub community, following waves of assaults.[9] Furthermore, mass waves of emigration were witnessed in the Kisan region east of Bethlehem. Altogether, these cases confirm a rapid increase in rates of eviction from the northern and southern fringes of Al-Aghwar towards the central region, leading to the closure of traditional pasturage routes and the encirclement of Palestinian communities inside ever smaller pockets.[10]

Al-Aghwar as a decisive space for the colonialist juncture belt

Since 1967, and specifically since what was then called the “Yigal Alon” settlement plan, which stipulated complete control over Al-Aghwar, i.e. the belt that stretches along the entire eastern slope of the West Bank, this area has received special Israeli colonialist attention. In this context, Al-Aghwar constitutes a security and settlement belt that joins the northern West Bank to the southern alongside an eastern line that runs adjacent to the Jordanian frontier, allowing the settlements to access military roads and barracks with minimum contact with the Palestinians. To achieve this, the occupation regime employs complementary measures which include:

- Unprecedented announcements declaring collective and privately owned lands to be “state land”, thus placing them in effect under Israeli sovereignty.
- Flooding Al-Aghwar with Israeli pasturing and agricultural outposts and empowered by the army which subjects these regions to military administration.[11]

- Legitimizing these outposts, promoting them into quarters or settlements, and providing them with roads and services.[12]
- Roads are closed and checkpoints are created to impede Palestinian movement and provide rapid access to settlers.

As regards declaring land to be “state land”, and by the end of 2023, the occupation regime had declared 501 *dunums* to be state land. Throughout 2024, 24,000 *dunums* were so declared, and in the first half of 2025, 744 further *dunums* were added and formally registered as such,[13] thus setting a new record in announcements of “state lands” that placed tens of thousands of *dunums* under direct Israeli control. All this took place in tandem with “sanitizing” these settlement outposts which repeatedly became the subject of government announcements. Thus, from a list containing 68 outposts whose status was being normalized in mid-2024,[14] five outposts in isolated areas were declared legal as a direct response to the wave of countries that announced they recognized the state of Palestine.[15] The matter evolved to the point when two decisions were announced declaring the creation of 13 settlement quarters and 22 new settlements, in addition to setting up special barriers and gates particularly in the southern and central West Bank.[16] These measures are then transformed into a clear policy which aims at a settlement “connection” in contrast to a Palestinian “disconnection”, leading to the splintering of the Palestinian geographical fabric and crippling movement between Palestinian communities.[17]

How does eviction redraw the map of “connection and disconnection”?

In Al-Aghwar, Bedouin societies have historically depended upon broad paths between valleys to reach sources of water and pasturage.[18] Hence, when an Israeli pasturing outpost is created in a particular spot, e.g. near a well or on a height overlooking a valley, it does not simply drive away the Bedouin family settled there. Instead, it effectively shuts off an entire pathway under unofficial protection (motorbikes, armed patrols, guard dogs, surveillance cameras), thus reconfiguring

the movement of surrounding villages.^[19] A series of outposts close to one another means in effect “a line of disconnection” that prevents lateral movement between the Palestinian villages of the eastern and central slopes, and forces shepherds to undertake much longer, more costly and more dangerous travel. Events of the last few months have confirmed this fact when simultaneous pressures by more than one outpost led to collective emigration from the hinterland of Kisan, al-`Ayzariyya and the central margins of Al-Aghwar.^[20]

From pockets to pasturing ghettos

The occupation regime pursues a policy of turning Palestinian communities into besieged pockets by means of a network of ring roads, checkpoints and metal gates. In Al-Aghwar, and to the east of Ramallah and Nablus, widening road no 90, declarations of “state lands”, and building agricultural roads specially for settlement outposts lead Palestinian villages to become rural ghettos incapable of expanding their spaces and agriculture.^[21] There are Palestinian reports that document the fact that new closure decisions and barriers have enabled the settlers to control whole regions and agricultural environments in the areas of Bethlehem and al-Khalil, and all the way to the southern Al-Aghwar.^[22]

The policy of besieging sources of water as an instrument of eviction

Assaults on water installations and sources constitute a decisive “instrument of eviction.” Deprived of water, a Bedouin society would need to leave within days. OCHA has documented repeated acts of destruction done to pumping stations and other structures belonging to `Ayn Samia, which supplies tens of villages with potable water, in addition to attacks on water tanks and pipes in pasturing communities, forcing the departure of families. These practices turn water from being a source of life to being an instrument for demographic control and a space of domination.^[23]

Significant cases on the ground

Successive events on the ground since the summer of 2023 have come to constitute a pattern of conduct aimed at emptying pasturage and strategically sensitive areas.

Before October 7, the evictions that affected the communities of Ras al-Tin, Wadi al-Siq, al-Qabbun, and `Ayn Samia were no mere isolated incidents but part of a wider plan to create “creeping frontiers” which act to redraw mobile borders between an ever-shrinking Palestinian environment and an ever-expanding area of Israeli settlements. After October 7, this pattern intensified to include additional communities in the central al-Aghwar, reaching up to Masafir Yatta, and witnessed new waves of emigration on the eastern slopes and at `Ayn Ayyub between the end of 2023 and mid-2025. This region is being gradually transformed into one devoid of any Palestinian connection and creating a settlement environment ever open to expansion. This “gradual advance” draws up the contours of an environment almost free of a connected Palestinian presence along sensitive pasturage blocs and known in colonialist discourse as the “protection of frontiers”, a matter of great importance in understanding the dynamics of expansion on the ground. These “frontiers” refer to “creeping boundaries” that separate lands “embraced” in the project of settlement and lands which at present lie outside it.

However, these boundaries drawn by pasturing settlement are not stable, since settler shepherds move constantly with the ever-expanding areas of pasture, leading to the shrinking and delimitation of the lands of the original inhabitants and in most cases turning them into closed and besieged pockets. Meanwhile, the “outside”, i.e. the area specifically designated as Area C, has become an environment open to ever-expanding Israeli settlements.[\[24\]](#)

This gradual advance intersects with what one might describe as a domino effect in regions such as the hinterland of Kisan, east of Bethlehem, where attacks by Israeli settlers and their concentration in pasturage outposts has led to the eviction of more than 23 families (128 individuals) during July, 2025. This dynamic is not confined to evicting families but contributes to building a “connecting archway” of settlements that extends from south of Bethlehem to the southern Al-Aghwar and the Dead Sea, enhancing a series of isolation measures that besiege the Palestinian villages, and establishing adjacency between the military and settlement zone all across the eastern borders of the West Bank.

But at `Ayn Samia, east of Ramallah, a different pattern appears: environmental and heritage annexation. This is when Bedouin evictions (2023) are joined with destruction of water infrastructure (2024-2025) and in accord with government policies to “save and develop” heritage sites as per government decree 2023/786. These policies are not confined to the mere protection of heritage but are also employed as an instrument to reformulate the entire site by transforming it into “heritage gardens” and nature preserves that restrict access by Palestinians. This has the effect of combining daily and direct violence with declaring the site to be one of heritage as a form of official annexation.

Thus, the three cases above demonstrate how forms of material violence are complemented by symbolic violence within a single colonialist system: from a graduated advance that redraws borderlines, to the domino effect which transforms evictions into ever-expanding cycles, to declaring sites as heritage, thus legalizing domination in the name of “protection of heritage.” These intersecting measures demonstrate that the colonialist enterprise does not employ one single instrument but rather a well organized and structured campaign that mixes violence on the ground with state policies, rendering the eviction of Palestinians and the rearrangement of their environment as one continuous and multi-faceted operation.[\[25\]](#)

The official framework: from “normalizing outposts” to “settlement administration”

The policy of evictions cannot be separated from government decrees that established a more centralized administration of settlements inside the occupation regime's Army Ministry, nor separated from a wave of normalizing and “legalizing” outposts and turning quarters into independent settlements, and the funding of infrastructures and roads. This is accompanied by land confiscations and declaring regions to be state lands. In successive reports, the Israeli Peace Now movement has documented the fact that the period after October 7 has witnessed a surge in building dirt roads and new outposts on private Palestinian land, rapidly exploiting the war situation to create new facts on the ground. This framework of policy creates organizational legitimacy for pasturing outposts hitherto regarded as illegal and

brings them into a network of financing and government services, enabling these outposts to apply further force and to expand.[\[26\]](#)

Within this framework of policies one can summarize the geostrategic transformation as occurring in three connected circles:

The eastern circle: the pincer on regions between Road 60 and Alon:

The Bedouin communities lying between Road 60 and Alon are the ones most subjected to organized assaults in recent months. These attacks aim at emptying the land by evicting its inhabitants, preceded by a rapid expansion of pasturing outposts stretching from north of Jericho, the `Awja basins, the Fasayil and Juftlik and all the way to Tubas, to the north and south. This has come in tandem with escalating and documented assaults and the blocking of many traditional pasturage routes, leading several communities to emigrate, thereby aggravating the absence of Palestinians alongside the eastern border. This in turn facilitates and bolsters the connectivity of settlements with military roads throughout the Jordan Rift Valley.[\[27\]](#)

The Alon Settlement Plan of 1968



Prepared by: Pato Borges (2009)

The central circle: the eastern highlands of Ramallah/Nablus

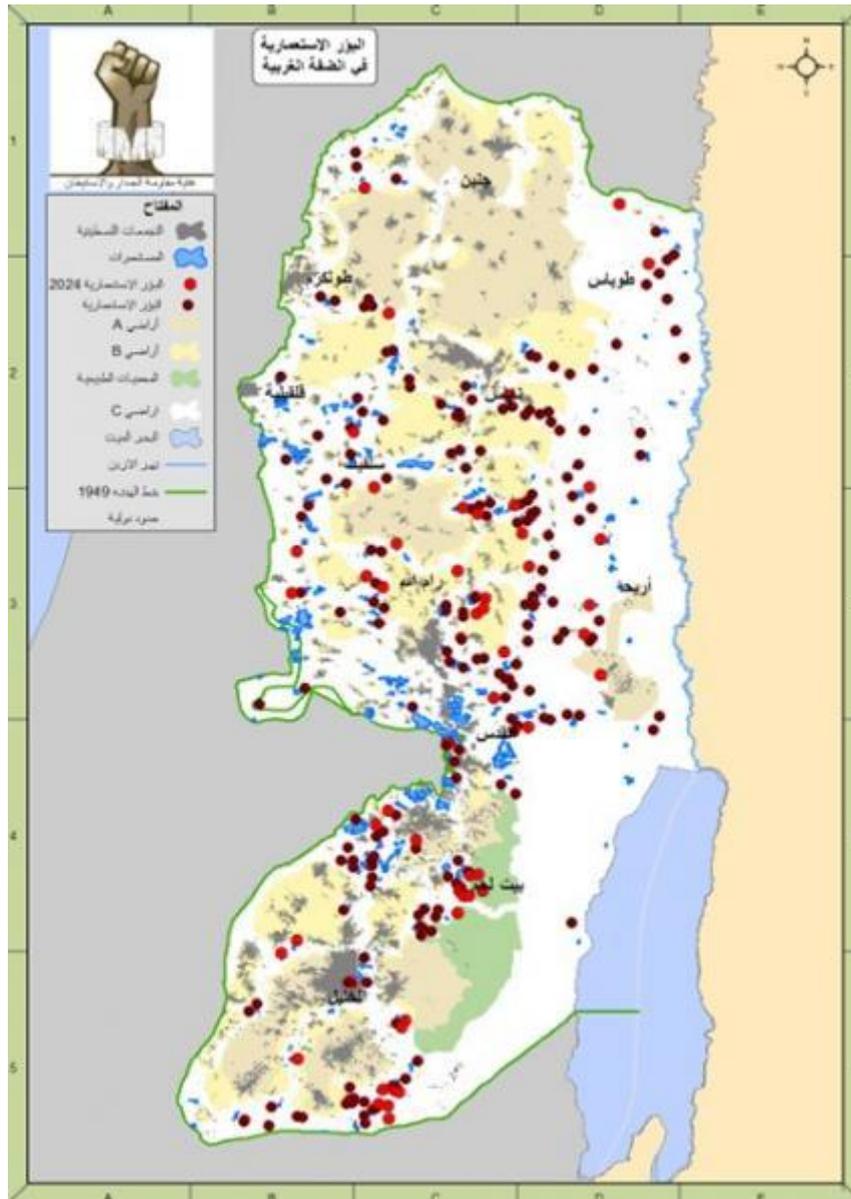
Clearing and vacating `Ayn Samia/al-Qabbun/ Ras al-Tin since 2023, along with evicting families from the eastern slopes after October 7: This has led to blocking all pasturage routes and movement between the villages east of Ramallah and the central Al-Aghwar, turning the eastern slopes into sundered pasturage routes interspersed with Israeli pasturing outposts. The result is a lateral disjunction that

places pressure on western villages but facilitates connecting outposts to the east.[\[28\]](#)

The southern circle: the hinterland of Bethlehem-al-Khalil up to Al-Aghwar:

The installation of new checkpoints and metal gates and unprecedented announcements of state lands along with active pasturing outposts has led to the rapid eviction of tens of families from the hinterland of Kisan in one week, in July, 2025. Reports indicate that their properties are destroyed after they leave. The result is to strengthen the arc of separation around the eastern borders of Bethlehem and all the way to Masafir Yatta, and the opening of settlement/military routes that stretch eastwards.[\[29\]](#)

Map showing the concentration of new and old Israeli pasturing outposts on lands belonging to the West Bank



Prepared by: The Authority to Resist the Wall and the Settlements

The political economy of evictions: from security to agriculture to heritage sites

Evicting Palestinians is not always accomplished under the pretext of “security”, but is also based on three interconnected driving movements that reveal the depth of the colonialist project:

Pasturage/agriculture as a catalyst for annexation:

The occupation regime resorts to creating pasturage outposts of settlement by providing them with legal cover and financial aid in order to gain control of wide areas of land but at a much lower cost than building traditional settlements and at a much faster rate of creating facts on the ground. The Authority to Resist the Wall and the Settlements has documented this phenomenon and has recorded a noticeable expansion of pasturage outposts in recent years.[\[30\]](#)

Water as a catalyst of control:

In recent years the Israeli occupation regime has relied on water as a direct instrument of colonialist dominance over the Palestinians. It has confiscated wells and springs and has forbidden water infrastructure projects while simultaneously allotting the greatest share to the settlements. According to a report by Al-Haqq Association, the Palestinians receive less than one third of their natural share of water, rendering their continued existence in threatened communities practically impossible.[\[31\]](#) Likewise, OCHA has documented 64 assaults on water sources on the West Bank during 2024 alone.[\[32\]](#)

Sites of heritage as catalysts of sovereignty:

Palestinian sites of heritage are taken over under the pretext of “protection and restoration” as a cover-up for exploiting them and redefining their character, governed by an Israeli security and civilian authority. This in turn justifies the building of fences and roads and forbidding access to Palestinians. A number of documents recently issued by the “Civil Administration” attached to the occupation army reveal that more than 63 sites of heritage on the West Bank have been included in so-called “Israeli heritage sites” in a move considered part of a strategy of

Judaization and “soft annexation.”^[33] Thus, colonialist domination of Palestinian land is not confined to direct settlement or forcible eviction but extends also to the symbolic/cultural sphere where Palestinian heritage is exploited as an instrument of sovereignty.

Among other consequences of annexing these sites to the settlements is the confiscation of lands surrounding these sites and forbidding access to them by Palestinians. This results in preventing the Palestinians of the West Bank from direct contact with their historic and heritage sites which constitute part of their cultural identity.^[34]

Connection and disconnection: what do they signify at present?

The forcible evictions of Bedouin communities, preceded by measures taken to impose an environment of expulsion, represent an end to a historic way of life that relies on pastures and flocks, the break-up of kinship groups and of local economy, and the forcible emigration to the margins of towns and villages where no alternative livelihood is available. Special survey and documentation reports issued by Palestinian government institutions and international organizations reveal that many families were forced to leave without their properties, and that the settlers proceeded to demolish their houses and paddocks after they'd left, to prevent them from returning and to turn their temporary absence into permanent exile. These acts are legally considered to constitute forcible evictions and are forbidden in international humanitarian law when they take place by force under a regime of occupation, or when committed by groups acting under the protection of that regime or in coordination with it.^[35]

From the perspective of any future political settlement, Palestinian society needs geographical and functional continuity between cities, villages, pasturage and resources. But the belt of colonial settlement stretching eastwards across Al-Aghwar and its edges contrasted with internal Palestinian disconnectedness makes daily life revolve around a labyrinth of checkpoints, ring roads, and closed areas. In turn, this acts to restrict the Palestinian living sphere turning it into small and separate

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First: A systematic, legal, and open-sourced documentation alongside a diplomatic effort

This creeping Israeli annexation requires accurate geographical and temporal documentation, including the archiving of assaults, monitoring the evolution of pasturing outposts, the course taken by agricultural roads, and the changes affecting access to sources of water and pasturage. International and local organizations use this documentation nowadays to establish the pattern of violations and their impact on forcible evictions and livelihoods.^[37] As the UN and the Human Rights Council begin to document cases of forced migration, a solid basis in law is available to hold the occupation regime and the individuals involved in these systematic acts of violence accountable, especially in cases where there is proof of official protection or actual involvement in these crimes.^[38]

Second: Immediate protection of threatened communities

Of vital importance at this stage is support to be given to these threatened communities to enable them to hold out and resist, to be extended by efforts exerted by both official and civil Palestinian institutions. But this in turn requires more investment and coordination in order to arrive at the widest coverage possible and improve the level of capabilities in order to frustrate the plans of the occupation regime that seek to connect and disconnect. To these efforts must be added empowering the activities of committees that run nightly protection patrols supported by foreign activists and providing them with the means necessary to effectively carry out their activities. Recent data by international organizations indicate that tens of these communities remain directly threatened. Protection itself can take several forms such as accompanying these pasturing communities, providing them with communication and warning devices, offering on the spot legal defense, and installing basic services, such as mobile water and electricity, that

reduce the fragility of existence for these communities. All this should take place in tandem with daily, on the ground monitoring and documentation of attacks.[\[39\]](#)

Conclusion

The period following October 7 is not simply one that witnessed increased violence. Rather, has witnessed a moment of escalation of the settlement project that coincides with disconnecting and separating Palestinian communities. The occupation regime has resorted to a number of complementary measures such as rapidly constructed pasturage outposts, checkpoints and gates, announcements of “state lands”, legalizing the status of outposts, and officially appropriating “sites of heritage.” Taken together, these measures have created a new functional geography in Al-Aghwar and on their margins. This new geographical configuration has not only emptied the eastern zone from its original inhabitants by causing mass evictions of pasturing and Bedouin communities but has turned the region into a connected military-settlement bloc, tied to a wide Israeli infrastructure network.

A stark contrast now appears. Whereas policies of separation and disconnection are imposed upon the Palestinians (road closures, denying access to pasturage and water, fragmenting villages and communities), an Israeli project is being implemented aimed at connectiveness (joining outposts to major settlements, connecting Al-Aghwar with Jerusalem and other interior centers, tightening the noose on the eastern range). Hence the maps do not simply display the redistribution of land but also the redistribution of livelihoods and of political capabilities. To the Palestinians there remains a dispersed geography without any future while the horizons for settlers are connected and expandable.

Accordingly, defending the existence of Bedouin and pasturing communities and maintaining them in place is more than simply a local struggle against forcible emigration. Rather, it is a strategic struggle to protect the last Palestinian space which connects the mountain slopes to the Aghwar, the villages to their sources of water and the land to those who tend it. Maintaining these spaces means protecting the possibility of Palestinian social and geographical connections, a prerequisite for any

possible political horizon facing a colonialist system that strives to turn spaces forcibly emptied into bridges of a settlement expansion that know no limits.

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