

peace-loving groups, and Arab and Jewish supporters of human rights started a protest campaign to disclose and refute the allegations made by the authorities and to condemn the savage operation. The village was visited by many solidarity delegations, and hundreds of visitors saw with their own eyes the signs of vandalism.

The issue was placed for urgent discussion on the Knesset agenda by the progressive list, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, and the Mapam party. The Israeli Minister of Agriculture, Arick Nahamkin of the coalition party, requested to have it omitted from the agenda, and that was done after voting on his proposal. All the Zionist parties in power, the coalition and the Likud, refused to cancel the issue. The Knesset even refused to transfer the issue for discussion to one of its committees. Knesset member, Maier Avedov of the Likud, had boasted that he knew the Arabs very well, saying that ' They must have brought these old trees from somewhere else and replanted them in state land so that they can claim ownership of the land.'

One definite proof was ignored—that is, a photograph which was made of the area in 1925 in which olive trees can be seen in that land owned by the villagers, the holders of rights since ancient times. Avidov also tried with his allegations to justify the action of the authorities in their plundering the land in order to allow the Keren Kayemet people to replant the stolen trees inside Israel. Some trees which belonged to the villagers of Qatannah have been replanted in Bir Al-Sabei (Birsheva). Now Al-Midya trees are planted in Bet Shemesh, Lod, around the Ramlah prison, and on the way between Ramat Gan and Betah-Tekva.

The villagers' response to the up-rooting of their trees

The authorities' workers were unable to carry away all the uprooted trees that day. Tens of trees were put into piles to be moved later. Hundreds of residents and some media people were able to see them, particularly on June 26 1986 when during a visit arranged for them they were briefed by the local committee on what had happened. The committee was established in order to lead the struggle to preserve what was left of the village land and to demand an end to the uprooting as well as for full compensation for all those suffering losses. Black banners were hoisted at the entrances of the village and on every house as an expression of anger and sadness.

On the morning of June 29, the committee members demonstrated in front of the Israeli Premier's office. The demonstrators brought with them three big tree trunks left behind by the bulldozers. Several slogans were lifted. Among them:

- Stop the barbaric actions and uprooting of trees.
- We refuse the allegations of the authorities that our land is owned by Israel.
- We have inherited our lands from our fathers and forefathers.
- Olive trees are the main source of livelihood for the villagers of Al-Midya.

On the trunks of the uprooted trees, slogans like the following were written: - You have uprooted 3300 trees, olive trees like me in Al-Midya village. Look at my trunk; I am more than 60 years old.

The aim was to disclose and refute the lies of the Israeli authorities which alleged