

Occupied Palestine February 1986

The Zionist authorities continue their oppressive policy against the Palestinians under occupation, following the iron fist policy. The month of February was no exception. There were increased attacks on Palestinian civil and human rights, ranging from land confiscation to outright murder, in an attempt to break the people's will.

Land confiscation and house demolition

Land confiscation is one aspect of the Zionist policy of *de facto* annexing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and emptying them of Palestinian citizens. On February 3rd, the occupation authorities informed several residents of the village of Surrah, near Nablus, that 200 dunums of their land had been confiscated. In the villages of Tal, Arraq and Bourin, 400 dunums were confiscated and fenced off with barbed wire.

On Feb. 4th, the Zionist authorities confiscated 4000 dunums of land belonging to the Hanmi, Mlitat and Nasasrah families of the village Beit Foureek. In Baleen near Ramallah, the villagers were told by the president of the so-called Supreme Zionist Organizing Council in the West Bank, that 15 dunums of their land had been confiscated in order to build a park.

In the area of Nabi Samuel, north of Jerusalem, the occupation authorities bulldozed a two-room house on February 6th, on the pretext that it was built without a permit. The house was owned by Mohammad Abdullah Ellayan, a 37 year old resident of Beit Eksa and provider for a family of thirteen, who said that it was bulldozed with all the furniture inside in the family's absence.

On February 12th, the citizens of Al Khader and Artas villages renewed their protest against an Israeli project to open a road cutting through their land and that of Beit Jala village. The size of the road exceeds the needs of the area. It is planned to be about 200 meters wide. This would mean extensive destruction of crops, agricultural land and homes that stand in the way of the road.

Destroying trees

On February 4th, Israeli radio reported that the Green Patrol of the Israeli Land Administration had uprooted 70 olive trees planted by Palestinians in Khirbat Samer, near Jerusalem. The next day, the same unit

uprooted 100 olive trees north of Bir Sabi (Beersheba), alleging that they were illegally planted on 'state land'. In fact, the Palestinians planted these trees to assert their ownership of land which the Zionist authorities were preparing to confiscate. The destruction was clearly intended to pressure them not to fight the confiscation.

On February 9th, Israeli radio reported an official decision which has very serious implications in terms of Zionist land confiscation and annexation policy. The decision is to uproot all trees in designated «forbidden areas» of public and private land all along the line that separates the part of Palestine occupied in 1948 from the West Bank. This project targets almost 10,000 dunums of land and thousands of olive trees. It is part of the overall plan of the occupation authorities for destroying Palestinian agriculture and changing the environment and demography. The current drive began the first week of January, when the Green Patrol chopped down and uprooted 6000 almond and olive trees (some 20-50 years old) northwest of Jerusalem.

In the Gaza Strip on February 11th, the occupation forces began bulldozing 45 dunums of forests and 28 dunums of planted trees owned by local Palestinian citizens. According to the Jerusalem newspaper *Al Quds*, this land will be added to Nissanet settlement which is built on Palestinian land.

Settlement plans

Israeli newspapers reported government plans to build 13 new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1986. This was announced by Housing Minister David Levy. Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai pointed to the coalition government's agreement to build 27 new settlements by the end of its term in September 1988.

The Israeli newspaper *Al Hamishmar* reported a secret Likud plan for intensifying settlement when it heads the

government (starting September 1986). The plan aims at housing 50,000 settlers and building outposts similar to the one existing in Al Khalil (Hebron where settlers have taken over buildings in the city's center). The plan aims at 'protecting' the land which was confiscated and declared 'state land' by the previous Likud government, amounting to almost a third the size of the West Bank. The plan envisions building 12 new settlements, six while Peres heads the government and the other six after Shamir takes the wheel.

Concerning Al Khalil, the Zionist authorities are planning to expand Kiryat Arba settlement in order to encircle the city in preparation for annexing it.

On February 3rd, the Israeli newspaper *Davar* reported that a new settlement is being built on the southwestern slope of Al Jalboa mountain, east of Jenin. It is designed to house 500 families.

Judaization

In its February 15th edition, the Zionist daily *Haaretz* reported that 40 rabbis met on February 13th, near the western wall of Al Aqsa mosque. They were led by the former chief rabbi Shlomo Ghoren, and adopted his position that Jews be allowed to enter the area of Al Aqsa after washing and taking off their shoes. The meeting was held on the initiative of Rabbi Grishon Slomon, president of the so-called Temple Mount Faithful. It is worth mentioning that the present Israeli chief rabbi, Mordechai Eliaha, announced three weeks ago that he supports building a temple in the southeastern corner of the area of Al Aqsa.

Four Palestinians murdered

In the city of Gaza, a 25 year old Palestinian, Shaban Atlouf, was shot and killed on February 15th, by Zionist occupation soldiers. The incident began when Atlouf refused to show his identification card to a Zionist patrol which then chased him and another man, and shot.

In the village of Silwad, near Jerusalem, a young Palestinian man died when a bomb exploded under his feet as he was walking in a field. Zionist settlers have before been known to plant explosives near Palestinian villages.