

attempts to strangle Palestinian villages and towns. Coupled with inadequate funding, exorbitant taxation, restrictions on construction and political repression, the ultimate intent is to drive Palestinians from their homeland altogether. The theft of Palestinian land is accomplished through a variety of means, ranging from evoking special Israeli laws designed for this purpose, declaring areas as «military zones» and increasing taxation, to outright vandalism.

The residents of Laqya in the Naqab (South Palestine) were terrorized out of their homes, then had their property confiscated under the Absentee Property Law and given to nearby kibbutzim (Lahav and Rataim). They are not allowed to build on the land they now reside on; there is no running water, no electricity, no telephones, no paved roads and no mail service. The 6000 inhabitants make Laqya the second largest town in the Naqab, but of the 75,000 dunums of land it had prior to 1948, only 12,000 remain. The 50,000 bedouin of the Naqab are also subject to systematic land seizure, as are the villages around Nazareth in the Galilee, and the villages of the Triangle: Mahfara, Ailot, Majd al Kurum, Nafr and Kuf Barra; Um al Fahm originally had 148,000 dunums; 128,000 have been confiscated. Abd al Latif Habib, head of Taibeh's council, reports the confiscation of more than half a million dunums since 1948.

No less criminal is the ploy of declaring large areas of land to be «military zones». What makes the pretext so outlandish is that no signs of warning or off-limits are put up, and then civilian settlements are seen to sprout all over the confiscated area! In the Sakhnin area of the Galilee, the Zionist settlement

Ma'aleh Zviah was built in the middle of what was declared to be a «shooting range». The Zionist settlers are allowed to use adjacent land for grazing, but the villagers of the Sakhnin and Arrabeh area are prohibited from cultivating the very same land which was originally theirs! These double standards only go to underscore the discrimination practiced in all other fields.

Vandalism and terror are also common practice. During the first months of 1985, thousands of fruit trees belonging to Palestinian citizens were destroyed by government troops. In the area of Sakhnin, 1345 olive trees were bulldozed. In another instance, 140 trees were destroyed. In the Arrabeh area, 1100 saplings were crushed by Zionist patrol cars which zigzagged over the land. Needless to say, these attacks are never taken seriously by Zionist officials. The Knesset has gone so far as to drop them from their normal agenda. In the Galilee, soldiers rounded up farmers in the middle of the land they were cultivating and starting shooting in the air. A 70 year old woman, two children and an 18 year old were injured.

Unjust taxation

The annual property tax levied on Palestinian-owned land was the focus of protest, especially in May of 1985. The tax is calculated per dunum according to estimates of the land's value which amounts to 300% of its real cash value. In 1985, a new land tax was enforced which was 1500% of the 1984 value. Previously, people were allowed to pay the tax in installments. In 1985, however, the Zionist authorities required that the tax be paid in one lump sum. According to the mayor of Nazareth, Tawfiq Ziad, the property tax levied on Palestinian

Land Day rally in the Galilee.

