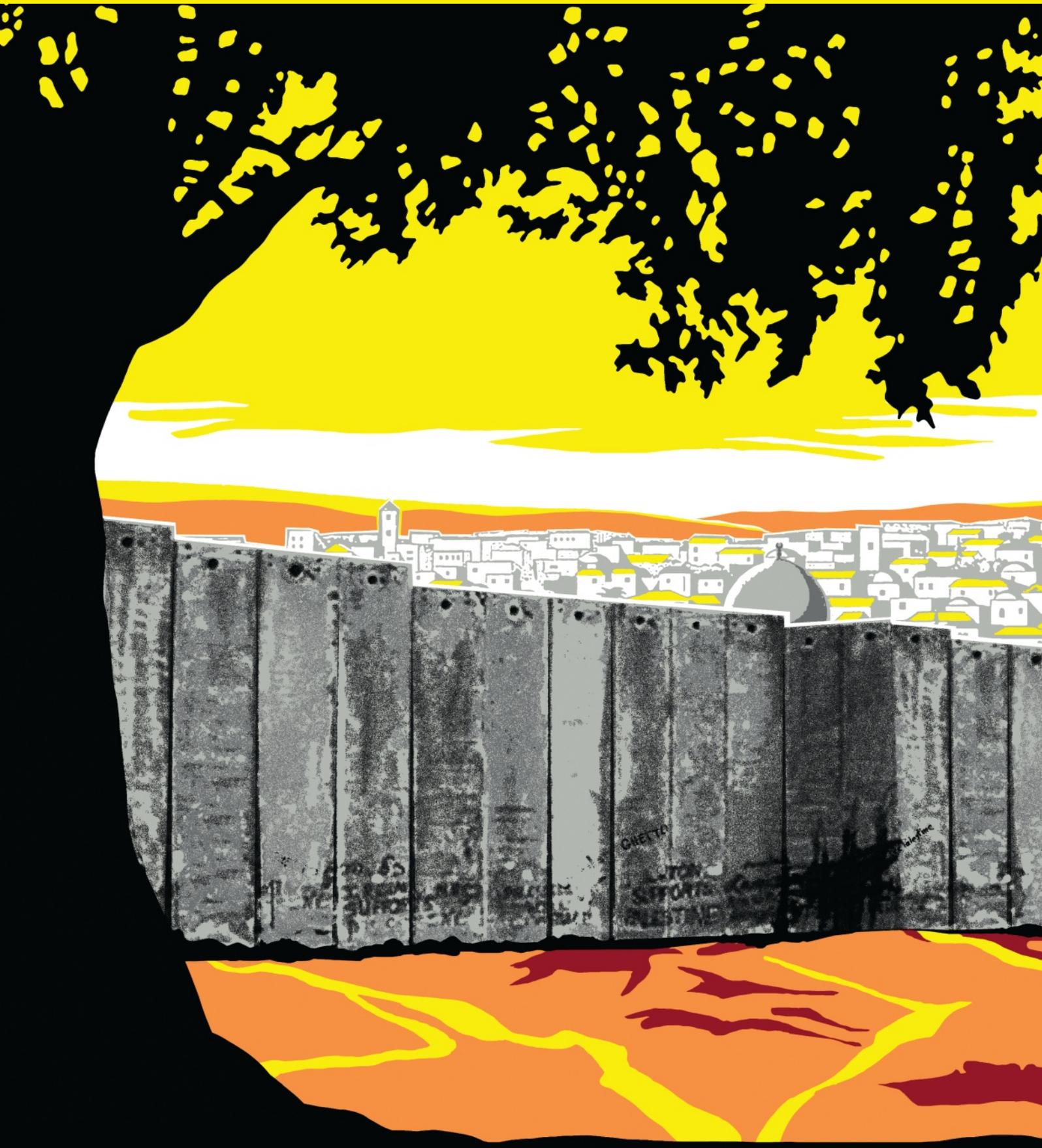


APARTHEID IN THE FIELDS

FROM OCCUPIED PALESTINE TO UK SUPERMARKETS



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By Therezia Cooper, Tom Anderson and Luke Starr

Dedicated to Karen Blake, a good friend and passionate campaigner for justice for Palestinian communities.

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Corporate Watch

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Corporate Watch is an independent, not-for-profit research and publishing group that investigates the social and environmental impacts of corporate power. Since 1996 Corporate Watch has been publishing corporate critical 'information for action' in the form of books, reports, investigative articles, briefings and magazines.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1948 Zionist militias fought a war of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian population. Much of the land they took by military force was used to establish agricultural settlements.

In 1967 the Israeli military occupied the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. Almost immediately, the state began supporting Zionist expansion in these occupied territories. There are now almost 800,000 settlers in the territories occupied in 1967, living in hundreds of settlements. These settlements are grabbing ever more land from the Palestinian population. Much of this land is used for farms, which pay Palestinians a pittance for working on land stolen from their families. This has created a lucrative market for Israeli export companies.

These same export companies export their produce to UK supermarkets, often labelling their goods as 'Made in Israel' to disguise their origins in Israeli settlements.

The Israeli military largely withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, unable to withstand Palestinian resistance to the occupation. Since then, the Israeli state has maintained a siege on Gaza, preventing freedom of movement of people and goods in and out of the Strip. Palestinian farmers are unable to export their produce independently and are forced to turn to Israeli export companies, which profiteer from the situation.

In 2005 a broad coalition of Palestinians made a call for ordinary people all over the world to take action to boycott Israeli goods, companies and state institutions:

“We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organisations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.”¹

We have compiled these articles and interviews, together with information on many of the Israeli exporters and UK supermarkets, as a resource for campaigners seeking to follow this call.

The first chapter of this briefing features interviews with farmers and activists in Gaza illustrating how the captive economy created by the siege of Gaza creates a lucrative market for Israeli agricultural export companies.

Chapter two bring together some of our interviews with Palestinian workers on Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley and their calls for a boycott of Israeli export companies.

Chapters three and four profile the companies profiting from the exploitation of Palestinian farmers and workers.

1. See more at: <http://bdsmovement.net/call#sthash.GNWjcMKH.dpuf>

Chapter 1

GAZA: FARMING UNDER SIEGE



In the besieged Gaza Strip, Palestinians face significant and diverse difficulties when it comes to farming their land, harvesting and exporting their produce, and Israel enforces what amounts to a de facto boycott of goods from the Strip.

Farming under siege in Gaza

First published in July 2014

Corporate Watch researchers visited the Gaza Strip during November and December 2013 and carried out interviews with farmers in Beit Hanoun, Al Zaytoun, Khuza'a, Al Maghazi and Rafah, as well as with representatives from the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Palestine Crops and the Gaza Agricultural Co-operative in Beit Lahiya. Palestinians face significant and diverse difficulties when it comes to farming their land and harvesting and exporting their produce under siege, and Israel enforces what amounts to a de facto boycott of produce from the Gaza Strip.

The land and the buffer zones

"There is a 300 meter 'buffer zone' in our area. It is common that people get shot at directly if they enter it. Within 500 meters people often get shot at. It is unsafe within 1500 metres of the fence."

- Saber Al Zaneen from the Beit Hanoun Local Initiative

Since the withdrawal of settlers and the end of a permanent presence of ground troops from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel insists that the area is no longer under occupation. However, as well as still controlling Gaza's air space, coastline and exports, Israel effectively occupies the area commonly referred to as the 'buffer zone', located all the way down the strip along the border with Israel. A buffer area has existed in Gaza since the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, when 50 meters on the Gaza side of the border was designated a no-go area for Palestinians. Since then, Israel has unilaterally expanded this zone on numerous occasions, including to 150 metres during the Intifada in 2000 and to changeable and unclear parameters since 2009.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) the buffer zone takes up 17% of Gaza's total land, making up to 35% of available farmland unsafe for Palestinians to use, with the areas nearest the border fence being the most restricted. Calling the boundaries of the zone 'vague, unpredictable' and 'uncertain', OCHA has divided the

zone into two danger grades: 'no-go' areas where Palestinians risk their lives if they enter as they are considered free fire zones by Israel (within 500 metres of the fence) and 'high-risk' areas, where the restricted access still has a severe consequences for farmers and where property destruction and levelling of the land occurs on a regular basis (within 500 and up to 1500 meters of the fence). These areas are kept under heavy surveillance by Israel, through the use of military border patrols and equipment as well as surveillance balloons and drone technology. There are regular incursions by Israeli troops into the buffer zone, sometimes as often as a few times a week.

In the ceasefire agreement during Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012, Israel agreed to ease restrictions on some Palestinian farmland and allow access up to 100 metres from the fence but this promise appears to have had limited impact on Palestinians. There has been no official announcement regarding the easing of the restrictions and as the Israeli human rights organisation Gisha (part of Legal Centre for Freedom Of Movement) has pointed out, advice from Israeli sources is often contradictory, citing the no go areas as sometimes 100 metres, sometimes 300 metres with no way for farmers to be sure. What is clear, however, is that Palestinians keep getting shot at from a greater distance than 300 metres and that anyone going closer than 500 metres from the border is putting themselves in danger. It is also clear that with so much of their land being out of bounds, farmers have no choice but to continue to work, at least partly, in areas which are unsafe.

Since 2008 over 50 Palestinians have been killed in the buffer zone and, although things have calmed down slightly since the truce in 2012, four Palestinian civilians have been killed and over 60 wounded by Israeli forces in the buffer zone so far this year, with five killed and approximately 60 wounded in 2013 according to Human Rights Watch. Most of these deaths have occurred when farmers have been trying to reach their land within, or near to, the buffer zone, or during demonstrations where communities have tried to assert their right so reach their fields. One role of international solidarity activists in the Gaza Strip is to accompany farmers wanting to access and farm their land. Sa'ad Ziada from UAWC estimates that the number of agricultural workers in Gaza has decreased from 55,000 to 30,000 as a result of the siege, with many of the remaining farmers unable to earn enough to survive from their crops.



Farmers work close to a surveillance tower in the buffer zone in Khuza'a in the besieged Gaza Strip.

As well as threatening life, the buffer zone has had a disastrous impact on Palestinians' ability to make a living in the Gaza Strip, with not only fields but also property and water resources heavily affected. The Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre states that since Israel's supposed disengagement in 2005 that "305 water wells, 197 chicken farms, 6,377 sheep farms, 996 complete houses, 371 partial houses, three mosques, three schools, and six factories have been destroyed within the 'buffer zone,'" and a total of 24.4 square kilometres of cultivated land has been levelled.

Destroying livelihoods in Khuza'a

"We can see the Israelis farming the land, and we cannot farm our land."

- Hassan, farmer from Khuza'a

Khuza'a is a village in the southern Gaza Strip, just east of Khan Younis. It is located only 500 metres from the border fence with Israel and 70% of the population are farmers. The town has suffered greatly from the Israeli Occupation Forces' enforcement of the buffer zone and from repeated air attacks. During Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, the village was targeted with white phosphorous, leaving farmland temporarily contaminated, it was also the site of one of the worst massacres of Israel's Operation Protective Edge attack in 2014. During Corporate Watch's visit to Khuza'a we talked to farmers representing several generations: Osama, Ahmed, Mohammed, Jihad, Salam and Hassan.

Hassan is 51 years old and has been a farmer in Khuza'a for over 30 years. He owns three different pieces of land, two dunams next to the border fence, two and a half dunams 400 metres from the fence and four dunams 620 metres from the border. He used to have olive trees on the plot by the border, but the land was levelled during an expansion of the buffer zone in 2000. In 2008 his other two pieces of land were bulldozed, including his

greenhouses. In 2009 his house was partially burned by white phosphorous, which also affected the land next to him. *"The farmers are the victims here,"* Hassan told us. *"When resistance fighters are targeted on the farmland it destroys everything".*

Hassan is now trying to grow tomatoes and olives on the two pieces of land furthest from the fence with the support of Unadikum and other international volunteers, who accompany farmers in the hope that their presence will make the work less dangerous. However, all the Khuza'a farmers reported that they frequently get shot at even when working on land over 500 metres away from the border. *"We have no choice. When the Israelis shoot we have to leave the land",* Hassan said.

According to the men we talked to in Khuza'a, the economic situation for farmers in the Gaza Strip is the hardest it has ever been - not only are none of them making any money, but the siege is slowly killing their ability to be agriculturally self sufficient. Hassan used to earn approximately \$1000 a month from his fields before

he lost his first bit of land in 2000. Now he has got debts of \$60,000 instead and no way of making money. We were told that farmers generally get seeds to plant from the traders which they then pay for after harvest season, but harvests in the Gaza Strip are highly unpredictable: land anywhere near the buffer zones can become impossible to farm at any point and some years whole crops are destroyed during Israeli attacks.

None of the farmers in Khuza'a are currently able to export the produce that they do succeed in growing. There has been a near total ban on exports from the Strip since the tightening of the siege in 2007, with only a minimal amount of agricultural produce being allowed for export through Israeli companies every year. No Gaza produce is allowed to be sold in Israel or the West Bank, which has traditionally been Gazan farmers' biggest market. Salam told us that he used to be able to market his produce for sale in Europe but that it had to be done through Agrexco and Arava, Israeli agricultural export companies, and that the last time he managed to export anything was almost ten years ago.

“I have been farming here for 30 years and all of the lands have been destroyed,” Hassan said with a shrug. “I used to produce 20 tanks of olive oil from my trees every year, but now I have to buy oil even for myself. Should we have to constantly rebuild everything? What will the future for my sons be? I am always arguing with my sons. They want to go to Algeria to find work, and then I will lose my sons too”. All these farmers want is the chance to have a future on their land.

Standing in the middle of the fields of Khuza'a, looking past the barren Palestinian land next to the fence and past the military watch tower, you can clearly see healthy looking green crops on the Israeli side of the border. The Israeli fields are close enough for us to hear the low humming of their fertilising plane as we leave.

Children farming close to the separation fence in Khuza'a



Uprooting families in Beit Hanoun

Beit Hanoun is one of the towns that has been hit the hardest by Israel's enforcement of the buffer zone. Located in the far north east of the Gaza Strip, only six kilometres from the Israeli city of Sderot and close to the Beit Hanoun (Erez) border crossing to Israel, the population is exposed to frequent incursions by the Israeli Occupation Forces and it shows. Approaching the buffer zone, you walk past a big crater in the ground, the result of a 2012 F16 strike, and house rubble can be seen in the distance. The area is under constant heavy surveillance by Israel and several surveillance 'balloons' monitor everything that goes on on the ground. According to Saber Al Zaneen from the Beit Hanoun Local Initiative, Israel bulldozed 9000 dunums of Beit Hanoun's land between 2001 and 2009, including 70 houses. Most of it was farmland. As a result, over 350 people living in the area have been displaced from their land. The Beit Hanoun Local Initiative, set up in 2007, is a grassroots group working with, and supporting, marginalised families and farmers living close to the buffer zone with the aim of helping them remain on their land.

In the past, farmers in the area used to grow olives, lemons and oranges close to the border but all of the trees have now been bulldozed. *"Communities now grow potatoes, peppers, tomatoes and watermelons on the outskirts of the buffer zone,"* Saber told us. *"You can not grow anything tall at all, no trees are allowed. If plants get higher than about 80 centimetres they will be levelled".* Shortly after we visited the area, the Local Initiative assisted the planting of some new wheat fields nearer the fence, challenging the restrictions in the buffer zone.

On top of the access restrictions and the personal danger involved, farmers working the land face the big challenge of being able to access water for their crops. Approximately 60 water wells in the vicinity of the Beit Hanoun buffer zone were bulldozed or bombed between 2001-2009 and finding enough water to grow healthy produce is now a constant struggle for the community. The area we visited had one small mobile water tank for the fields but locals told us that as it requires either electricity or fuel to run they were not always able to use it. Instead they relied on a makeshift pit dug in the field and lined with tarpaulin in order to collect rain water. Gaza suffers from a severe and drawn out fuel crisis which, during our visit at the end of 2013, resulted in mains electricity only being available around 12 hours a day on a six hour off/six hour on basis at best. As a result, fuel for personal use is both expensive and hard to come by. (For an expanded explanation of the fuel crisis in Gaza, see Corporate Watch's briefing *Besieging Health Services in Gaza: A Profitable Business.*)

Farmers working in the buffer zone in Beit Hanoun



House demolitions in Al Zaytoun

“We plant our plants here to claim our rights to the land. We are not making a profit, we are working for nothing.”

- Ahmad from Al Zaytoun

We met the farmers Ali, Rafat, Nasser, Ahmad, Jawad and Ishmael outside Ahmad’s house next to the Malaka intersection area of eastern Al Zaytoun, just south of Gaza City. There used to be a three storey family home on this plot, but there is now a much smaller house next door. This is the result of continuous targeting of the area by the Israeli Occupation Forces, who have a military base close by. Ahmad, who was born on this land, told us that his family’s house had been demolished three times: in 2004, 2005 and during Operation Cast Lead in 2008.

“In 2008 they destroyed everything around here”, Ahmed said. “They even destroyed my jars of olive oil. We did not have time to bring hardly any of our things. The Israelis came through a gate in the fence in the buffer zone with 14 tanks and four military bulldozers. They were shooting a lot to make us leave before they arrived. We have had to rebuild our home three times”.

As in other buffer zone communities, it is not only property which is frequently targeted by Israel -it is

anyone who attempts to farm the land. All of the farmers we talked to in Al Zaytoun had some land within 300 metres of the fence. The last shooting incident had occurred just four days before our visit. When there is instability happening in the area, everyday activities for farmers become even more precarious.

The story of the farmers in Al Zaytoun is a familiar one: before the tightening of the siege in 2007 they all used to be able to make a decent profit from their land, with some farmers getting close to \$30,000 a year, but now they make no profit at all. Some of them used to export part of their produce, albeit through Israeli companies, but now none of them are able to export anything and all of their goods go to the local Gaza market. “No-one has any money so we hardly make anything,” said Ahmed. “Sometimes we have to feed some of the vegetables to the animals”.

Mustapha told us that farmers in this area have had some help from Norwegian People’s Aid, who provided them with an irrigation system for the fields, and they also have a tractor. But even with equipment, taking care of the land is a challenge under siege. Just like the farmers in Beit Hanoun, they rely on access to electricity for the water pump and petrol for the tractor and those

An Israeli military post overlooks farmers fields in Al Zaytoun



things are often not available. *“The water is so salty here that we can only plant very specific plants like aubergines olive trees, potatoes, cabbage and spinach. Cucumbers and tomatoes can’t be planted”*, said Mustapha. The salty water is the result of the Gaza aquifer having been contaminated by sea and sewage water, partly through a decline in ground water levels and partly as a result of infrastructure damage during Israeli air attacks in 2009.

According to the UN, 90% of the water from the aquifer, Gaza’s only water resource, is not safe to drink.

After the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the middle of 2013, life for Gaza’s farmers has become even harder. The men in Al Zaytoun said that they used to be able to buy cheap fertilisers which had come through the tunnels from Egypt at the local market. However, since the tunnels were destroyed this is no longer possible. Products are now both harder to get hold of and more expensive, as they have to come through Israel, meaning that there are no cheap choices and that tax will be added.

Despite all of the problems that they face, the people of Al Zaytoun continue to work their land: they have no other option. As we walked around their fields they showed us how they have started to re-cultivate land nearer and nearer the fence, moving the area of cultivation forward by around ten metres per week. In Gaza simply farming the land has turned into an act of resistance.

Uprooting history in Al Maghazi

“It is not the uprooting of the trees themselves that is the worst, it is the uprooting of our history.”

- Abu Mousab from Al Maghazi

For Palestinians, the buffer zones do not only create financial hardship and humanitarian crises, they also sever people’s connection with their history. In Al Maghazi, a primarily agricultural community in the central Gaza Strip, we met Abu Mousab, a farmer who also holds down a job as an iron welder in order to make a living. Al Maghazi is a refugee camp that was established in 1949 and, according to Mohammed Rasi el Betany from the Al Maghazi refugee council, approximately 95% of the population are refugees. However, Abu Mousab’s family have lived on the same piece of land for generations. When we visited, his father, who is in his late 90s and who used to work for the British Mandate before the creation of Israel, was asleep in the room next door.

Staying steadfast on the farmland has not been easy for Abu Mousab and his family. Their land is located approximately 300 metres from the border fence and, despite the fact that conditions have become a little bit safer since 2012, working the land is dangerous. *“We have to play a kind of cat and mouse game with the soldiers”* Abu Mousab said. *“When the soldiers go away we turn on the water and quickly irrigate our plants, but as soon as they start shooting we have to leave”*. Only a week before our visit Abu Mousab’s nephew Medhat had been shot at with live ammunition warning shots when

he was trying to weed some crops on the part of the family’s farmland nearest the fence. Some years, the family have been able to access their land so infrequently that the crops have failed, leaving them with no income from their land. During good years when they do manage to harvest their barley, wheat, almonds, citrus fruits, olives and apricots they sell their produce to the local market in the Gaza Strip.

However, many people do not feel able to risk their life to work on the land. One of them is Mousa Abu Jamal, another farmer from Al Maghazi. He used to have ten dunams of farmland planted with olive trees within the buffer zone, all of which have been uprooted by Israel. When he tried to go back to re-cultivate his land in the middle of 2012 he was shot at. He has not been back since.

“I was always told by my father that he who has been raised on his farmland must stick with his farmland until he dies and that is what we are doing,” Abu Mousab said. His family are so determined not to give up their heritage that during the bombardment of the Gaza Strip in 2012 they made a decision not to leave the area for relative safety further away from the border.

“Ten years ago the Israelis came with Caterpillar bulldozers and destroyed olive trees and several 200 year old sycamore trees on my land. Those were trees my grandfather used to sit under”, Abu Mousab said. ***“They had to use two of their bulldozers to uproot just one tree, they were so rooted in our history.”***

Boycott Divestment and Sanctions

Israel's siege of Gaza is slowly strangling life in the Strip. It affects farmers' access to land, crops, water and electricity. It also limits the people of Gaza's ability to buy food grown in Gaza and makes people more reliant on imports of Israeli goods. The situation for exporters is even worse: only a tiny amount of agricultural produce gets exported each year, all of which has to go through Israeli companies. The ban on Gaza produce being sold in Israel and the West Bank amounts to a de facto boycott of Gaza's export industry by Israel.

What can the solidarity movement do?

During Corporate Watch's visit to the Gaza Strip, the people we interviewed made their hopes very clear: they want boycott, divestment and sanctions of Israel, but they also want opportunities to trade and make a living. This presents a challenge to the BDS movement. As the tiny amount of Palestinian produce that is being exported from the Gaza Strip is currently exported through Israeli companies it means that any boycott of, for example Arava, will boycott Palestinian produce too. When asked about the implications of this, farmers were still supportive of a boycott, as they hoped the pressure would be more beneficial to them in the longterm than the minuscule benefits the current export levels achieve.

"What we need is people to stand with us against the occupation", said Mustapha from Al Zaytoun. "By supporting BDS you support the farmers, both directly and indirectly and this is a good thing for people here in Gaza".

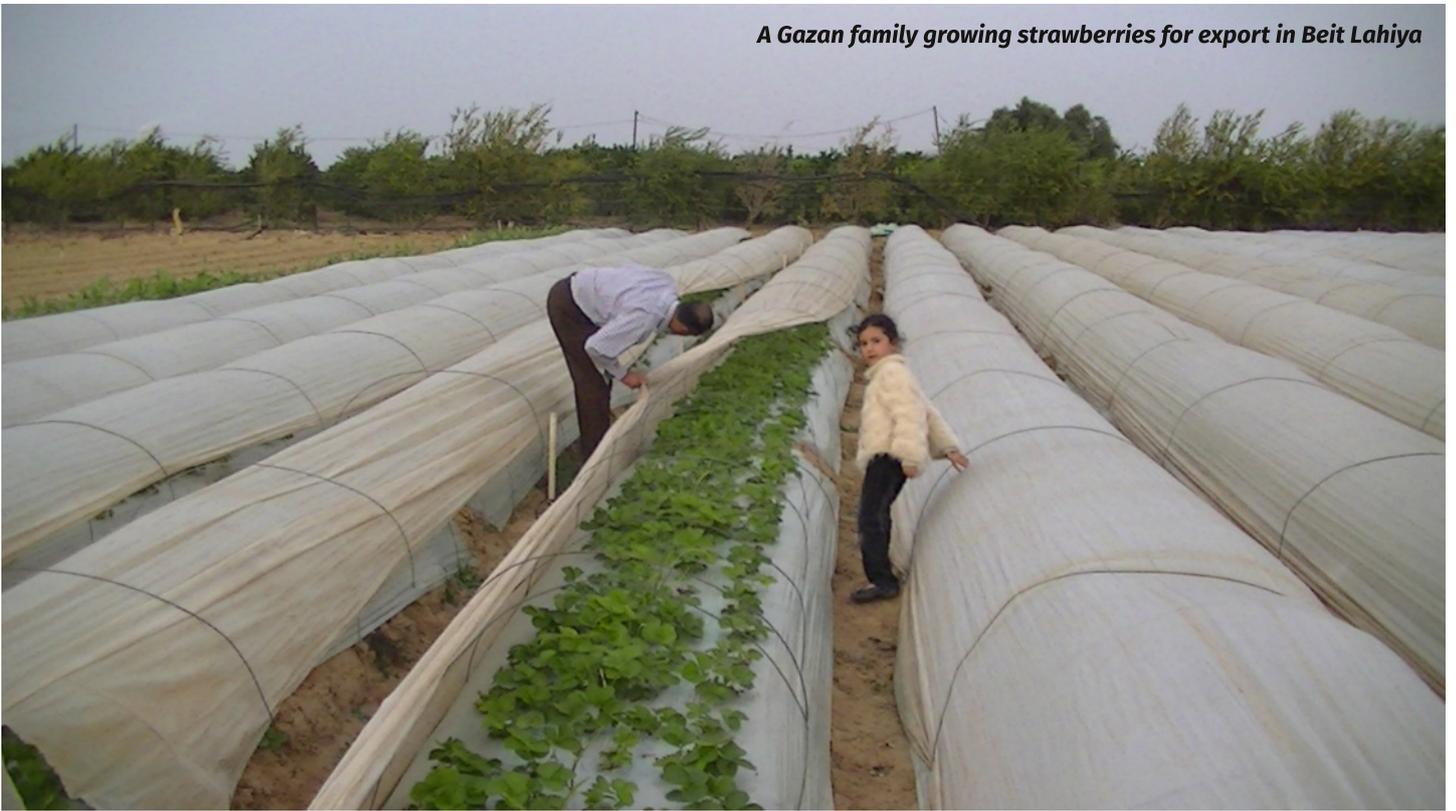
Farmers all over the Gaza Strip were particularly keen on getting the right to label their produce as Palestinian, ideally with its own country code, even if they have to export through Israel. Country of origin labels for Gaza goods is something the solidarity movement could lobby for.

There was strong support amongst farmers for increased action against Israeli arms manufacturers, as they are often on the receiving end of the arms companies' weapons.

Mohsen Abu Ramadan, from the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Network, suggested that one good way forward could be to engage farming unions across the world and get them to endorse the BDS call in solidarity with Palestinian farmers - an avenue that has not as yet been properly explored.



< Young farmers protest in Gaza



Trading under siege: the dying export industry in the Gaza Strip

First published in November 2014

A dependent economy

“The Israeli occupation allows us to export a small quantity of produce, just to show the world that they are nice to the Palestinians, but they are using us. Everything we do is controlled by them.”

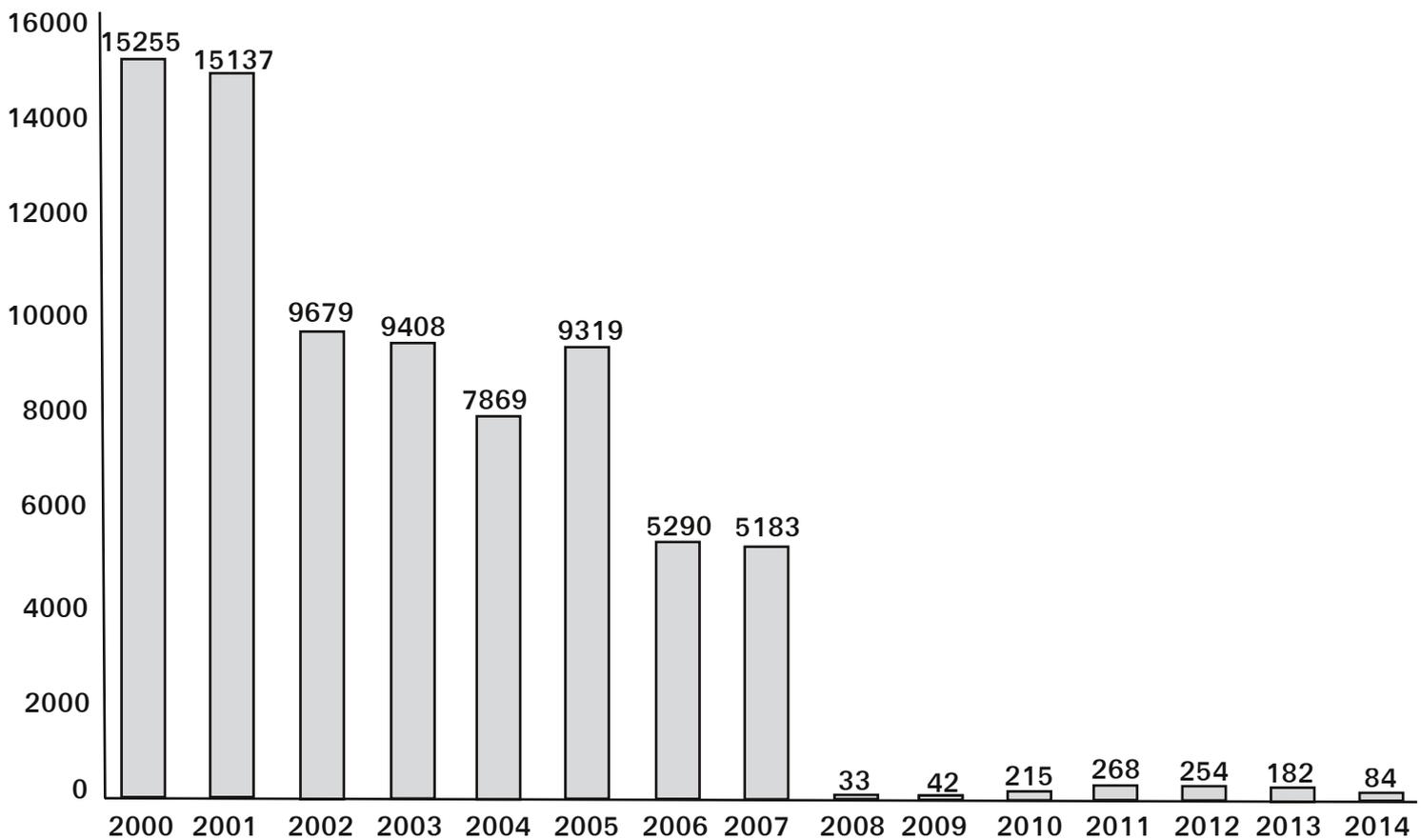
- Saad Ziada, Union of Agricultural Work Committees

As a result of economic agreements made during the period of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian economy as a whole has become totally dependent on Israel. The Paris Protocol, signed in 1994, is an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority which outlines the economic relations between the two in the areas of customs, taxes, labour, agriculture, industry and tourism. In theory, the protocol was meant to facilitate the free movement of goods, including agricultural produce, and give Palestinians access to international markets, but in practice it has worked as a basis for consolidating Israeli domination of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Whilst Israel benefits from tax-

free access to markets in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian exports are strictly controlled by Israel and can only be carried out through Israeli companies, hence benefiting the economy of the occupier.

When it comes to the Gaza Strip, the situation for Palestinians is even worse. Since the tightening of the siege in 2007, Israel has implemented a de facto economic boycott of Gaza, with no industrial goods and a minimal amount of agricultural exports being allowed through the Israeli controlled Karam Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) goods crossing only. The Karni (or Al Montar) crossing, which was established as a main terminal in 1994 to facilitate the transfer of goods between the Gaza Strip and Israel, was closed permanently in 2011 as the siege intensified. Before the closure, the crossing had been effectively non-operational since Hamas' takeover of the Strip in 2007, only running a skeleton service through a conveyor belt transporting gravel and animal feed. The Rafah crossing to Egypt is completely closed for exports from Gaza.

Since 2007 farmers in Gaza have been prohibited from selling their produce to Israel and the West Bank, traditionally their biggest markets.



Gaza Crossings Activities Database. Source OCHA

The devastating decline in Gaza's export industry is recorded in OCHA's Crossing Activities Database, which monitors all exports and imports into the Gaza Strip. So far during 2014, only 84 trucks full of export goods have been able to leave the Gaza strip, with no more than 268 trucks of exports leaving in any one year after 2007. These figures stand in sharp contrast to the improvements agreed upon before the Hamas takeover of the Strip. The 2005 Agreement of Movement and Access negotiated between Israel and the PA promised that 400 trucks of export goods a day would be allowed to leave the Gaza Strip. This agreement was abandoned after Hamas gained control of the Strip. In stark comparison, so far this year 33,212 trucks of goods have entered Gaza, the vast majority carrying Israeli goods destined for the Gaza market.

Corporate Watch talked to Palestinian farmers, who were struggling to make a living, about the realities of trying to export their produce from Gaza, and their ambitions to be in control of their own economy.

Palestine Crops: 'From Palestine Land to Global Markets'

To get a clearer idea of how Gaza's limited export industry works, Corporate Watch met up with Mohammed Zwaid in Gaza City. Mohammed works as an export manager for Gaza's only export company, Palestine Crops. Operating both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, Palestine Crops is a project funded by a Dutch government initiative. The company supports Gaza's farmers and finds them an avenue for exporting their produce, mainly strawberries, herbs and flowers, and works with numerous farming cooperatives throughout the occupied territories. In the Gaza Strip, Palestine Crops' producers include The Association of Etihad for Agricultural Farmers, the Beit Lahiya Agricultural Cooperative Association, Agricultural Cooperative for Producing and Exporting Vegetable and Flowers, the Beit Hanoun Agricultural Cooperative Association and the Al Amina Agricultural Cooperative. Using the slogan, 'From Palestine Land to Global Markets', the aim is to eventually run an independent Palestinian exporting business. At the moment, however, all Palestinian exports have to be exported through Israel via Israeli companies.

"We have to go through another company to export the Palestine Crops produce", Mohammed told us. "They normally take around 7-10% commission. In the past farmers used to export via Coral [The Israeli state exporter Carmel Agrexco's brand name for Palestinian produce before they went into liquidation in 2011] but now most of our exports go through [the Israeli company] Arava and we also use the Flower Board of Israel for flowers and also strawberries".

Chapter 1: Gaza: Farming under seige

He said there were other companies, called Sole and MOR, exporting very limited quantities from the Gaza Strip. Some produce was exported to MOR through an intermediary West Bank owned company called Harvest. According to Who Profits, a new incarnation of Carmel Agrexco, now part of Bickel Flowers, is also exporting from Gaza again.

Mohammed said that Mehadrin, one of the biggest and quickest expanding Israeli agricultural export companies, is not interested in working with Palestine Crops' farmers.

Europe is the biggest market for Palestine Crops now that the more profitable markets in Israel and the West Bank are blocked off from Gaza's farmers and the restrictions imposed by Israel's siege have made Palestine Crops lose their marketing network with old markets such as the Gulf countries. In the last few years there has also been some small exports of herbs to the USA.

Building a brand

The employees at Palestine Crops have worked hard to build a distinct Palestinian brand which makes it clear that what the buyer gets is Palestinian produce. They are part of the Global GAP (good agricultural practices) scheme, meaning that their produce can be traced through the grower number, and the company has its own stickers that highlight that the produce is Palestinian grown. But they have one big problem - Palestine lacks its own bar code and the produce gets exported with an Israeli one. Mohammed said that a lot of effort has gone in to trying to get a distinct bar code but without luck.

“We have our own stickers”, he said, “but Arava has asked for them to be smaller and often Arava stickers are put on top of ours. Our produce is taken inside Israel by the Israeli company and then taken to a packing station where it is repackaged to new specifications”.

Palestinian produce is being exported from Gaza by Israeli companies. These strawberries are being exported by the Israeli company Arava



Mohammed told us that the prices that the farmers in Gaza get for their produce have gone down since the economic downturn, and exports to Europe also face other cost challenges. *“We used to get around 15 NIS for a kilo of strawberries”,* Mohammed said, *“but now it is 10-12 NIS”*. Another thing adding to the cost for the producers is that the EU market is a lot pickier about things like the colour and sizes of strawberries, leading to more wastage than used to occur with exports to the Middle Eastern market.

Because of pressure within Europe, all EU exports now have to come with a certificate of origin, which is good news for those wishing to identify Palestinian produce. But Mohammed said that some EU countries demand that the actual paperwork is issued in the West Bank and not in Gaza, so when they want to obtain the EUR1 forms needed to authorise exports they need to contact the Ministry of Finance in Ramallah, who then gives the paperwork either to them or straight to the company that they are exporting through. This restrictive stipulation is part of a strategy to undermine the Hamas government by insisting on only dealing with the PA.

Normally the Israeli companies contact Palestine Crops whenever they want to buy something and give them an indicative price for the produce for the following week, but sometimes the farmers get lower prices than agreed when the produce reaches the border, and large quantities of produce are frequently rejected.

No choices

There used to be a secondary, and more profitable, avenue for exports from Gaza through the tunnels located under the Philadelphi corridor to Egypt, but this ground to a halt after almost all of the tunnels were destroyed in a crackdown by the Egyptian Government before the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood in early July 2013. In the six month season preceding the clampdown, Palestine Crops exported over 200 tonnes of cherry tomatoes, and many tonnes of sweet peppers through the tunnels. These exports were approved by the Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza. For many farmers these exports provided a lifeline and growers adapted their crops for the Egyptian market.

“There used to be 100 dunams of sweet peppers in the Gaza Strip and now there are 600-700”, Mohammed told us. This is more than the local market can absorb and with farmers now forced to try to sell their produce locally, prices have dropped drastically. The tunnel closures have further affected farmers who can no longer access essential fertilisers that they used to get from Egypt. Whilst they are able to get approved seeds from the Israeli market, some fertilisers are prohibited from entering Gaza by Israel and the ones that can enter come at inflated prices that many farmers can not afford.

“We are not in a strong position”, Mohammed said, *“and our priority is to make it profitable for the farmers”*.

The strawberries of Beit Lahiya

Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip, is an area famous for its strawberries and home to proud strawberry co-operatives, but according to Amjad, one of the growers, strawberry farming in the area is dying as a result of the siege. The western side of the town has already had to stop planting strawberries because of salt water contamination of the ground water, something which is expected to affect other parts of the area too within a decade. Despite the growing of cash crops being encouraged by Israel, exports are limited, highly unpredictable and getting worse.

“In the past we used to export for maybe four months a year”, Amjad told us, *“but last year we were only allowed around one month and very limited quantities. It was the worst year for strawberry farmers. In 2012 our farm planted seven dunams, but this year we have only planted one”*. He said that everything is getting too expensive, with no guaranteed profit.

Amjad's experience is backed up by Jamal [name changed at the interviewee's request], from the Gaza Agricultural co-operative in Beit Lahiya. The co-operative works with 45% of Beit Lahiya's strawberry farmers and, since Agrexco's liquidation, exports its goods through Arava and Flower Board of Israel via Palestine Crops. The cooperative has experienced problems since the tightening of the siege in 2007. *“After the siege everything has become more expensive,”* Jamal said. *“There were 2500 dunams of strawberries in Gaza in 2005 and only 770 in 2012-13. Strawberry farmers are giving up.”*

The cost of exports

Jamal told us of the increasing obstacles faced by the members of the co-operative when going through the export process, with less opportunities and higher costs. Palestinian farmers have to pay for Israeli manufactured cartons and containers before the export process even begins, and recently the cost of transporting the produce to the Karam Abu Salem goods crossing has rocketed because of tightening Israeli restrictions and the Gaza fuel crisis.

“In the past, pallets of strawberries used to be allowed to be 180 centimetres high and held 100 cartons,” Jamal told us, “but now pallets are only allowed to be one metre high and can only be 60 cartons, and this has increased transport costs, it is too expensive.”

This means that on the Palestinian side of the border each vehicle can transport 15 pallets of goods. On the Israeli side of the crossing, they are allowed to be piled higher and each vehicle can transport 26 pallets, making transport less costly for the Israeli export company. Another reason for the increased transport costs is the change and limitation of goods terminals. The now closed Karni crossing was located close to Gaza City and much closer to Ashdod port and Tel Aviv than the currently used Karam Abu Salem crossing, meaning there was easier access in the past for Gaza's exporters.

Once the produce reaches the crossing, the process of handing the goods over to the Israeli side also disadvantages Palestinian farmers. Jamal said that they can never be sure how much they will get paid. They normally get a list of prices from the Israeli exporter every week during the season with the prices that they will pay for the following week, but if any circumstances change in the middle of the week they get revised, and produce frequently gets rejected on the border.

Jamal said that they once sent ten tonnes of strawberries for export but got told that the quality was not good enough and only got paid for 6% of what they had delivered. Part of the problem is the security procedures. Once the drivers arrive at the terminal, they have to get all of the produce out for checks before it gets handed over to the Israeli side. This can often mean that the produce gets spoiled by being out for long periods in hot temperatures.

“We need the crossing to be a lot quicker”, said Jamal, “and we also want equipment there to protect the produce, like refrigeration”.

This has become even more important now that almost all produce is destined for Europe, which has high quality controls and demands that produce withstand the extra transport time. As an exporter representing farmers who are working under almost impossible circumstances, Jamal's priority is to find avenues for increased business. He wants to regain access to Israeli and West Bank markets and to make Gaza's trade profitable but is currently prevented from doing so.

Despite Israel's increasingly desperate anti-boycott rhetoric, it is clear that it is Gaza's farmers who are controlled and denied their right to make a living by a siege that amounts to something much harsher than purely a boycott of the Gaza Strip.

Looking to the future

As we have seen, Gaza's export industry, minimal as it is, is currently totally dependent on Israel. Any farmer who wants a chance to export their produce has to adjust the crops that they plant to suit the Israeli export companies, often being left with a surplus of particular crops when exports are arbitrarily denied. At the same time, 80% of people in Gaza are dependent on food aid, and Israel exports a huge amount of its produce into the Gaza Strip. As the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement's briefing Farming Injustice points out, much of what is brought into the Gaza market is produce deemed unsuitable for international export, and dumping it on Palestinians in the Strip both profits the Israeli export companies and undermines the local Palestinian market.

Palestinians we talked to in Gaza were clear about what they need: they want the freedom to export their produce on their own terms and to all markets without having to go through Israeli companies and they want food sovereignty, or the right to define their own food, agriculture and land.

None of this can be achieved without an end to Israel's brutal siege of Gaza and occupation of the West Bank. When calling for a boycott of Israel, activists must equally demand freedom of movement for both people and goods, including the permanent opening of the Rafah crossing to Egypt.

Will the flowers of Gaza break Israel's siege this Valentine's Day?

First published in November 2014

This article was first published in the run up to Valentine's Day 2014. For supermarkets and florists, Valentine's Day means a massive increase in the sale of flowers. But where are the bouquets that they are flogging to romantic couples grown?

Farmers in Gaza have long been encouraged by Israeli companies to focus their production on high risk 'cash crops' such as flowers and strawberries, and the arrival of carnations from Rafah to European markets for Christmas or Valentine's day is often cheered on by the Israeli Government which uses it as a PR exercise to show how it 'facilitates' Palestinian exports. Unsurprisingly, this is not the full story.

According to the Palestinian Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) there used to be over 500 dunams of carnations planted in the Gaza Strip, but since the tightening of the siege in 2007 flower exports have plummeted year on year and there are only around 60 dunams left. The planted land used to produce over forty million stems for export, but now the few carnation farmers who are left are struggling to sell 5-10 million.

"The Israeli occupation allows us to export a small quantity of produce, just to show the world that they are nice to the Palestinians, but they are using us. Everything we do is controlled by them", Saad Ziada from UAWC told Corporate Watch in his Gaza City office in November 2013, just before the flower exporting season was supposed to start.

This statement is true for all produce in Gaza, but flower exporters are particularly susceptible to the control Israel holds over exports, as they rely on hitting the market at exactly the right time for popular flower buying holidays. If the border is closed for a week and the flowers miss the export window for Valentine's Day, for instance, their profit for the whole year can be lost.

We visited Rafah to talk to one of the few flower growers still in business and hear about their situation under the siege.

'The problem is the border and the siege'

Hassan Gazi al Hijazi has been in the flower business for over 25 years and has seen the changes in the flower export industry. When he started out he had to be registered as an Israeli grower, despite growing his flowers in Gaza, and he gave classes in the art of flower growing to new farmers. *"There used to be 53 flower farmers in the Rafah area and now there are only four of us left,"* he told us. *"I personally used to have 40 dunams and now I only have four".* He said that he needs assistance from outside to even operate them now. His flower packing house displays signs showing financial support received from Spain.



Flowers growing in Hassan Hijazi's greenhouses in Rafah >

Chapter 1: Gaza: Farming under seige

Just as with all produce from Gaza, his flowers have to be exported via Israel, through an Israeli company. In the past this used to be Carmel Agrexco, which used the name Coral for Palestinian produce. After its liquidation, he now works with a Palestinian Co-operative which exports under the brand name Palestine Crops using the slogan 'From Palestine Land to Global Markets'. Palestine Crops is a Gaza initiative which works with agricultural co-ops in the strip and aims to create a market for Palestinian labelled goods and, eventually, independent exports. For now, however, this is impossible and although some exports from Gaza come with Palestine Crops branding, they are dependent on their Israeli distributor. In the case of flowers, this is primarily the Flower Board of Israel. Once transported out of Gaza, the flowers are taken to the big flower auction houses in Holland, where they are sold by grower name. By the time the bouquets reach UK shops they will have been mixed with other flowers and it is unlikely the buyer will be aware of their origin.

Talking to Hassan, it becomes obvious just how much the farmers of Gaza are at the mercy of the Israeli occupation forces. Palestine's flower export season lasts from December until May. The most important sales periods are Christmas and Valentine's Day. According to Hassan, these are often the seasons when the border is closed. Our interview took place on 5 December, a time which should be busy in Rafah.

"I should be exporting my flowers around the 15 December to be in time for the Christmas market, but I do not know how much I will be allowed to export yet", Hassan told us. "If you are not able to export for those occasions the price for flowers drops and you lose". Farmers in Gaza are not able to export flowers during the summer as this is the season when Holland grows the same crops.

"The problem is not the growing of the flowers, the problem is the border and the siege", Hassan said while showing us his beautiful dunams of ready-to-go flowers.

As with most custom-designed cash crops there is not enough of a local market for Hassan's flowers if he fails to export them; they either just go to waste or become animal food. No one in Gaza can pay a price which would even make the enterprise break even.

In the past Hassan could get around \$120,000 for exporting two million flowers if he had a good season, but for the last five years he has been paying the big upfront outlay necessary in flower growing from his own pocket, just dreaming that he will be able to get a return on his investment.

The statistics: The decline of Gaza's flower exports

The table below shows that flower exports have decreased to a fraction of what they were in 2004. During 2009 and 2012, the years of major Israeli attacks on the Strip, exports were prevented entirely.

Gaza's flower growers see no light at the end of the tunnel, with most not having the cash flow to continue their profession. Exports are declining and, with increased border closures, are becoming even more unpredictable.

We asked Hassan for his opinion about the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. We were particularly interested considering that his livelihood relies on exports through Israeli companies. *"You should continue these campaigns even if it damages our business",* he said. *"The problem for us is that there is no other way we can export, but people on the outside should continue to boycott and help us keep the borders open".*

This sentiment was one that was repeated over and over again across the Gaza Strip, and the challenge for the solidarity movement is clear: in order for Palestinians to be able to control their own exports, the siege needs to be broken – permanently.

Date	Carnation stems	Trucks	
End of 2004	44,000,000	200	
2005	30,700,000	210	
2006	21,500,000	205	
2007	37,400,000	187	
2008	2,100,000	10	
2009	0	0	
2010	10,668,520	74	
2011	8,974,890	57	
2012	0	0	< Recorded Gaza flower exports (according to Palestine Crops)

Sumud flotilla sails despite Israeli intimidation

First published in December 2013



Gazan fisherfolk setting out on the Samud flotilla

On Monday 2 December 2013, Gazan fisherfolk and hundreds of their Palestinian supporters, as well as international activists, participated in a flotilla to highlight the Israeli restrictions, harassment and violence against fishermen.

The demonstration was organised jointly by the General Union of Fishermen and the Intifada Youth Coalition. The General Union of Fishermen represents fishermen from all over the Gaza Strip.

For a full report of the day see <http://palsolidarity.org/2013/12/photos-palestinian-fishermen-and-activists-sail-to-protest-israels-siege-of-gaza/>.

Palestinian fishermen are regularly arrested and shot at by the Israeli navy, who occupy Gaza's waters. Gazan fishermen regularly have their boats and nets confiscated and are prevented from pursuing their livelihood.

According to the Gaza based Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, between the start of 2013 and the beginning of November, "Israeli occupying forces carried out 132 attacks against fishermen, during which 18 fishermen were arrested, eight fishermen were injured, seven boats were confiscated, and nets were destroyed in seven incidents".

Are Israeli security forces using information from mobile phone service providers for intimidation?

On the night before the flotilla was due to take place, several fishermen reported receiving phonecalls from the Israeli security forces, threatening that if they participated in the flotilla they would be arrested and their boats would be confiscated. It is not clear how the Israeli security obtained their phone numbers but it seems likely that they had obtained them from the Jawwal company. This is not the first example of Israeli forces using Palestinian phone networks for psychological operations against Palestinians. After the Israeli military found a tunnel being constructed from Gaza below the Green Line in October 2013, Gazans received text messages saying that the Hamas government was "*spending millions on tunnels which should be spent on the Gazan people.*" (See <http://www.worldtribune.com/2013/10/21/israeli-text-messages-warn-gazans-not-to-help-hamas-build-tunnels/>).

'To exist is to resist'

The flotilla was dubbed the Sumud Flotilla. Sumud, or steadfastness, refers to the everyday resistance of Palestinians stubbornly going about their daily lives despite Israeli repression and the refusal of Palestinians to leave their lands or to give up their livelihoods. The aim of the flotilla was to highlight the harassment and violence faced by Palestinian fishermen, even when fishing in the area which is permitted by Israel.

Since the Israeli attack on Gaza last year, dubbed Operation Pillar of Cloud, Gazan fishermen have been 'permitted' to fish six nautical miles from the shore. This was an extension of the three mile limit which had been in place from the end of the Israeli attack of 2009 to the 2012 ceasefire. However, in the 1990s the Oslo agreements set the permitted area at 20 nautical miles. All these restrictions which have been placed on access to the sea, either through agreements or through unilateral Israeli action, are an unacceptable imposition on Palestinian freedom of movement.

In practice, the fishermen are attacked by Israeli boats even when they are fishing as little as a mile from the shore. For example, last Wednesday 27 November Israeli boats opened fire on Palestinians and then arrested two fishermen and confiscated their boat while they were sailing approximately one nautical mile from the seashore off the coast of Rafah.

The Sumud flotilla reached four and a half nautical miles from the shore, near the limit of where Palestinians can go



to fish. The flotilla went unmolested by Israeli boats, although an Israeli drone was seen overhead. This was probably because of the presence of the media and international activists. Barely a few hours after the flotilla returned to shore there were reports of two separate attacks against fishermen by the Israeli navy.

Palestinian human rights groups and farming organisations have called on the international community to act to prevent Israel's crimes against fisherfolk and farmers.

< Palestinian fisherfolk launch flotilla to challenge Israel's siege on Gaza in December 2013.

Palestinian women's union calls for boycott of Israel

First published in September 2014

In December 2013, Corporate Watch interviewed Taghrid Jooma of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC) about the union's work in Gaza and its view of the international movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Taghrid told us that *“UPWC was established in 1981 in the West Bank to advocate for women's issues – economic, social and political. It has 3500 members in Gaza. It is a part of the General Union of Palestinian Workers (GUPW), affiliated to the Palestine Liberation Organisation.*

“We run a kitchen project and a sewing project. Our kitchen employs women who don't have jobs, particularly the wives of prisoners and martyrs [Those killed by the Israeli military and by the conditions of the Israeli occupation and siege], and improves their income. However, we can't get raw materials for these projects because of the siege.”

We measure how much you are in solidarity with us by how much you boycott

We ask Taghrid about UPWC's position on the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign. She replies: *“Not everyone agrees that boycotting Israel is necessary in the GUPW. The leaders of the union are involved in negotiations and are not keen on boycott. Some people are hypocrites. But UPWC's position is to boycott Israel. We measure how much you are in solidarity with us by how much you boycott.*

“The best way to boycott Israel is to boycott their products, as this affects their economy. During the first Intifada, groups of women produced goods locally so they did not have to buy Israeli goods. People used to burn Israeli products or throw them in the river and workers refused to work in the settlements.

“There are many ways to boycott. At UPWC we focus on economic boycott. We also work to expose cultural appropriation of Palestinian cultural heritage.

“Israel is one of the world's largest diamond exporters.

We campaign for people to stop buying Israeli diamonds [polished in Israel], as the money goes to help build the settlements.

“The Israelis export Palestinian produce and export it with an Israeli label. For example, they export roses from Gaza for nickels and dimes and sell them for a lot of money.

“We are against the Oslo accords [the accords with the Israeli government, signed in the 1990s, which institutionalised many aspects of the Israeli occupation and created a client Palestinian economy. Israel did not honour its obligations under the accords] and we boycott normalisation projects [ie projects which promote a normalising of relations with Israeli companies, government or institutions while the occupation of Palestinian land continues]. We don't accept money from USAID and other funds which support normalisation”.

Taghrid goes on to say: *“We have no relationship with Israeli unions and we consider the people that do that as criminals”.* Many Palestinian trade unionists support a boycott of the Israeli umbrella trade union organisation, the Histadrut, because of its failure to represent Palestinian workers and its overt support of Israeli state policies. For example, in 2010 the British University and College Union (UCU) broke ties with the Histadrut. A UCU spokesperson said that the Histadrut *“supported the Israeli assault on civilians in Gaza”* and *“did not deserve the name of a trade union”.*

Taghrid Jooma



Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in Gaza: empowering action

First published in July 2014

As we write this there is an ongoing massacre in the Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of the operation on July 8, which the Israeli Occupation Forces are calling 'Protective Edge', 620 Palestinians have been killed and 3,752 injured according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Over 70% are estimated to be civilians. By the time you read this those figures will be higher and Israel's bombardment shows no sign of slowing down.

The increasingly big protests that have taken place around the world prove that solidarity with Palestine is growing and that people are ready to stand up to Israeli war crimes. But big demonstrations are not enough. This is the time to intensify action. One way for internationals to do that is to join the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Movement against Israel. The BDS National Committee (BNC) has issued an urgent call for people to take action for Gaza, as well as a renewed call for an immediate arms embargo on Israel.

A lot of the noise about the boycott is coming out of the West Bank, where Israeli businesses operate out of illegal settlements and Western companies are complicit in construction on occupied land, creating clear cut

targets for solidarity activists. When Corporate Watch visited the Gaza Strip at the end of 2013, we wanted to get the perspective from there and we talked to Ayah Bashir, a member of the Gaza based organising committee for BDS and supporter of the One Democratic State Group, about BDS and its role in Gaza's resistance.

A place to resist

Ayah first got involved with the BDS movement at university in 2009 when she joined the Palestinian Students Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel (PSCABI). It was just after Operation Cast Lead, a brutal three week attack by Israel during which over 1,400 Palestinians died. *"I was feeling really powerless about the situation in Gaza at that time",* Ayah said. *"I did not feel like there was any way for me to fight for my freedom at all, so when I learned more about BDS I felt very interested and inspired. By being involved in BDS I would be able to do something. I wanted to work to make BDS known to more people in Gaza".*

In 2009 Ayah was involved in holding the first Israeli Apartheid Week in Gaza, an event that takes place in campuses around the world each year. *"That experience really made me and the other students feel more powerful, like we were able to do something against the occupation",* said Ayah. *"It is the one thing we can do".*

In Gaza it makes a lot of sense to work on the call for an academic boycott, as students in the Strip are heavily

Demo for Gaza in Brighton, UK



affected by the siege. Every year students lose out on university places abroad, and sometimes even scholarships, as a result of not getting permits to leave Gaza via Israel's Eretz crossing, or being stuck behind the frequently closed border with Egypt at Rafah and hence missing enrolment dates. During our visit to universities in Gaza, numerous students told us of dreams crushed in this way. Our translator, Maher Azzam, lost out on a university place in the US, as he would have to go to Jerusalem for his interview, but was not granted a permit by Israel to get there.

"Like a prison"

The lack of freedom of movement is a major issue in Gaza and, Ayah said, also harms the interaction between internationals and Palestinians. A few years ago she had a chance to study abroad and completed a masters degree in economics and political science at the London School of Economics.

"When I got out of Gaza it felt like I had gotten out of prison, and the time in London was very inspiring for me. I met a lot of solidarity activists and began to see how BDS works internationally and the kind of impact boycott actions could have on Palestine. I believe more Palestinians need a chance to study abroad and experience this".

Gaza boycott success

The biggest boycott related success Ayah has experienced inside Gaza was when the Palestine Festival of Literature (PalFest) made it there for the first time in 2012. Ayah said it was a big step for them: the culture festival had made two attempts to enter during previous

years but had been denied so just getting them there was a triumph. *"We then succeeded in getting PalFest to endorse the BDS call, which was a really big step for them".*

Ayah also emphasised how the messages sent by people in Gaza can be used effectively to make a strong case for a boycott.

"After Mahmoud Sarsak [a Palestinian footballer who was on hunger strike for three months whilst held without charge under administrative detention in an Israeli prison] joined BDS he did this interview where he was standing in the football stadium that had been targeted by Israel and this sends a powerful message in support of the sports boycott."

When it comes to Gaza, all boycott actions need to be done in conjunction with the overall aim to break the siege and give the people of Gaza back their freedom of movement and right to an independent economy. Two years ago Ayah participated in the World Social Forum, where she met a lot of Palestinians from outside of Gaza.

"I want to experience freedom. I want to be able to see Jerusalem, see my friends in Haifa" she said. "I thought I knew Palestine so well but meeting these people from 48 [what is now Israel] and the West Bank made me realise I didn't know their experience. Now when people ask me where I would like to travel I say Palestine".

Ayah has written two powerful articles for the Electronic Intifada about life in the Gaza Strip during the current attacks: *Suffocating indoors under the rain of Israel's bombs*, and *Art is a Hammer to Shape Reality*, an article about PalFest's visit.

Take action

During our time in Gaza, we talked to everyone we met about BDS: health workers, farmers and fisherfolk, students at several different universities, community groups, unions and victims of Israeli attacks. The answer from everyone was clear: living under siege they do not have the privilege or choice of always being able to boycott, but we do, and they need us to intensify our campaigns. Over and over again we heard from the younger generations that they no longer have any faith in foreign governments, but they do have faith in the people. That is why BDS needs to be a world wide solidarity movement.

One of the strengths of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement is that it easily lends itself to the use of a diversity of tactics. Direct action, picketing, researching, letter writing, lobbying and outreach all play a role in BDS successes. So there is a space for everyone.

Chapter 2

AGRICULTURAL APARTHEID IN THE JORDAN VALLEY



Israeli agricultural companies in the West Bank operate on land which has been taken from Palestinians by force. Communities, whose livelihood has been decimated by the occupation, have no option but to work for below the minimum wage on land which, in many cases, previously belonged to their families.

These Israeli companies consistently underpay their workers. Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements have been entitled to the Israeli minimum wage since an Israeli Supreme Court ruling in 2007. At the time we did our interviews, the hourly minimum wage was 23.12 NIS (New Israeli Shekels), the equivalent of 184.96 NIS (£33) for an eight hour working day, having risen from 20.70 NIS in 2009.

However, for Palestinian workers on Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley, these wages seem an impossible dream.

Case Study: Agricultural apartheid in the Jordan Valley

In 2010 and 2013 Corporate Watch conducted over 70 interviews with Palestinians working on Israeli settlements. These interviews showed that workers are consistently paid as little as half the minimum wage. Many of our interviewees also reported that children under the age of 16 were employed on the settlements, that working conditions were unsafe, that they were not paid holiday pay or sick pay, that they had no health insurance and that they were banned from forming unions.

Palestinian people in the Jordan valley are threatened with being wiped off the map by the Israeli government, who want to annex the valley. The majority of land in the valley was designated Area C under the Oslo agreement. Palestinian communities in Area C are under constant threat of demolition by the Israeli military.

The table below outlines our 2013 findings:

Name of settlement	Wages reportedly paid	Wages paid are below the minimum wage	Companies sourcing goods from the settlement	Child labour reported	Workers said that they were not allowed to unionise
Beit Ha'arava	65-70 New Israeli Shekels (NIS) (£12)	Yes	Arava, Edom	Yes	Yes
Beqa'ot	82 NIS (£14.50) (minus 12 NIS deducted for transport)	Yes	Mehadrin Tnuport (MTEX), Carmel Agrexco, STM Agricultural Exports		Yes
Na'ama	65-80 NIS (£11.50 - £14.20)	Yes	Viva, Carmel Agrexco		Yes
Kalia			Carmel Agrexco		
Tomer	70 NIS (£12.50)	Yes	Edom, Hadiklaim, Agrexco	Yes	Yes
Massua	80 NIS (£14.20)	Yes	Mehadrin Tnuport (Mtex)		Yes
Vered Yeriho	70 NIS (£12.50)	Yes	Carmel Agrexco		Yes
Argaman	60 NIS (£10.60)	Yes	Carmel Agrexco, Ada	Yes	

Palestinian workers' views of the companies working in the settlements

Corporate Watch asked the Palestinian workers on Israeli settlements that we met about their opinion of the companies working there. The quotes below are illustrative of their views:

“It is important for you to tell people that these settlements are illegal and that we don't have any choice except to work for them... I think it's important to boycott Israeli products as the settlements are stealing our land and stealing our water. [If the settlement companies were to close down it would be] like a dream, inshallah (God willing), it's freedom for the Palestinian people.”

- Mohammed, worker in Tomer settlement

“We support the boycott even if we lose our work. We might lose our jobs but we will get back our land. We will be able to work without being treated as slaves.”

- Zaid, worker at Beqa'ot

“When the settlement economy is destroyed the settlers will leave. They are only here for business.”

- Fadi, worker at Beit Ha'arava

“They are working on stolen land, using water that they have stolen from us. If the boycott campaign damages these companies then the settlers will leave our land.”

- Fares, worker at Beit Ha'arava

We believe that it is not enough for supermarkets and retailers to claim that they do not source goods from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They should cease sourcing from companies that are profiting from the seizure of Palestinian land and from a captive workforce living under occupation. By sourcing products from companies like Arava, Mehadrin, Edom, and Hadiklaim, supermarkets are supporting the settler economy and acting against the wishes of the Palestinian people, who are calling for a boycott of these companies and of all Israeli goods until Israel ends its occupation.

On the following pages are a selection of some of the interviews that Corporate Watch has carried out in the Jordan Valley. The names of all interviewees have been changed to protect them from recriminations from their employers. Many interviewees were happy to be named but Corporate Watch did not wish to risk any adverse affects on those who were kind enough to speak to us.



< An Israeli government sign outside the Palestinian village of Fasayil

'We want to work without being treated as slaves'

First published in June 2014

We met 44 year old Rashid and 38 year old Zaid in their hometown of Tammoun in the northern West Bank. They both work in the illegal Israeli settlement of Beqa'ot, a colony with 171 residents situated close to the Palestinian community of Al Hadidya in the Jordan Valley.

Tammoun is situated just outside the Jordan Valley. Like thousands of other Palestinian workers, Zaid and Rashid travel into the Jordan Valley in search of work on a daily basis. To cross into the valley they have to pass through the Israeli military checkpoint at Tayasir or Al Hamra.

Rashid has worked in Beqa'ot since the early '90s whereas Zaid worked in Israel until 5 years ago. Zaid tells us: *"Now it is impossible for me to get a permit to work outside of the West Bank."*

For Israeli companies, sourcing their goods from the settlements in the Jordan Valley allows them to circumvent workers' rights and health and safety regulations. According to Zaid: *"Inside Israel the workers have contracts and the conditions are better. This is because in Israel there are some controls on companies, unlike in the West Bank."*

Both men work all year round, except for September-November when there is no work available. They have no contracts and tell us that none of their workmates do either. Their job is to plant grapes and tend to the vines, pruning them and spraying them with fertilisers and chemicals. At harvest time they cut and collect the grapes.

Zaid and Rashid both work in the fields outside the boundaries of Beqa'ot. They do not have a permit to enter the settlement itself.

Paid below the minimum wage

Zaid and Rashid are employed directly by the settlers in Beqa'ot and speak to them directly to arrange their work. Both get paid 82 New Israeli Shekels (NIS - about £14.50), 18 of which goes towards daily transport.

They have no insurance provided by their employer. Rashid explains: *"Last year one of the workers died, but the settlers did not help his family at all."*

The men do not receive any paid holiday, even for religious holidays. This is despite the fact that the Israeli government advises that workers are entitled to 14 days paid holiday and must receive a written contract and payslips from their employer.

Both men are members of the General Palestinian Workers Union (GPWU). However, they are unable to represent workers in Beqa'ot or negotiate with their bosses. According to Rashid: *"We organise trainings for agricultural workers but we are not recognised by the settlers, we do not receive any representation from Histadrut"*.

Histadrut is the Israeli trade union organisation. Many campaigners for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli apartheid have called for a boycott of the Histadrut because of its failure to represent Palestinian workers and its overt support of Israeli state policies.

Rashid tells us: *"We label the grapes 'Made in the Jordan Valley' and mark them with the name and phone number of*

the Israeli settler.

"Each of the settlers has his own packing house. When we harvest the grapes they are taken first of all to packing houses in Beqa'ot owned by individual settler, then transported to a central refrigeration unit owned by the Moshav [a Hebrew word for a cooperative farm]. Then a refrigeration truck takes them to be exported."

The men tell us that the majority of the grapes they harvest are exported through Mehadrin.

Working for poverty wages on land stolen from their families

Rashid and Zaid refer to Beqa'ot by its Palestinian name, Libqya. Rashid tells us: "Before the occupation in 1967, Libqya was owned by Palestinians who used it for planting crops and raising animals. All of the families around here owned land in Libqya.

"I remember when my mother passed Libqya when I was young she told us how she used to play there with her brothers and sisters. Our family owned 70 dunums of land there.

"This reality is too painful. When I was older I tried to reach the land my mother told me about. But a settler told me I was forbidden to go there."

'We will get back our land'

Both men are supportive of the call for a boycott of Israeli agricultural companies. When it was pointed out that if the boycott was successful then their employers would not be able to pay them a wage any longer Zaid responded:

"We support the boycott even if we lose our work. We might lose our jobs but we will get back our land. We will be able to work without being treated as slaves."



< Much of the fresh produce grown on Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley is marketed internationally as organic, despite the fact that it's grown on land which has been colonised at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian population

Workers paid below the minimum wage in the Israeli settlement of Na'ama

First published in June 2014

Ayman works in the illegal Israeli settlement of Na'ama. He comes from the northern West Bank, outside the Jordan Valley. His work is arranged through a local Palestinian intermediary. He sets off for work at 3am through Tayasir military checkpoint. In Na'ama his work consists of planting tarragon, sage, mint, thyme, onions and chilies.

Na'ama is an Israeli colony that was set up on Palestinian land in the Israeli occupied West Bank close to the city of Jericho in 1982. According to Israeli human rights group B'tselem, it has 92 inhabitants.

Ayman tells us: *"In the morning we take the tractors from the kibbutz and work in the fields til 10am. Then we go to the packing house and sort the good crops from the bad."* The poor quality produce is exported to Russia while, if possible, the high quality produce is exported to western Europe.

According to Ayman: *"I receive 65 NIS (about £11.50) for an 8 hour day. My break is deducted from my pay packet. I don't receive any sick pay and the settlers don't pay hospital bills or provide me with health insurance. If you break machinery or lose tools the value is deducted from your wages. Trade unions are forbidden in Na'ama"*.

Workers deprived of their rights

According to Ayman, the settlers in Na'ama ensure that workers do not remain at the settlement long term to avoid them gaining legal rights: *"The workers are only allowed to work in Na'ama for three years. After that they are asked to leave. This is because after three years the employees are entitled to an annual rise in pay."*

Ayman tells us: *"We put the herbs in boxes and label them 'Viva'. Sometimes the labels say produce of Na'ama, sometimes Jordan Valley."* According to Ayman, some of the goods from Na'ama are exported through Carmel Agrexco and some are labelled 'Viva'.



< A house in the Israeli settlement of Tomer, which is next to the Palestinian village of Fasayil. Israeli settlements receive the vast majority of the water supply in the West Bank, as can be seen by the lush vegetation in the picture. Israeli settlers receive generous subsidies from the Israeli government for colonising the West Bank, while Palestinian communities are often denied water and electricity.

Poverty wages and child labour in the settlement of Beit Ha'Arava

First published in June 2014



We met Fares, Younes and Jammal near the Northern West Bank town of Tammoun in February 2013. Fares and Jammal were 23 years old at the time and Younes was 20. They had been working as agricultural labourers in the Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley settlements for between nine and seven years. All three worked in the settlement of Beit Ha'Arava, close to the Dead Sea in the Southern Jordan Valley. According to our interviewees, Beit Ha'Arava used to supply fresh produce to Carmel Agrexco before its liquidation in 2010. Now the settlement grows the majority of its produce for the Arava and Edom export companies.

Fares, Younes and Jammal come from the Palestinian village of Tayasir in the North of the Jordan Valley. Their work is arranged on a daily basis by Fadi, a Palestinian intermediary who receives payment from Israeli settlers for supplying them with workers. Fadi deals with settlers

in Na'ama, Beit Ha'Arava, Beqa'ot and Mehola.

Fadi tells us: *"My family had 175 dunums of land in the Jordan Valley but after the occupation it was taken and now it is part of Sdemot Mehola settlement. I have seen the settlers using the land to raise cows and plant flowers."*

Six days out of seven, Fares and Jammal set off at 3am in the morning from Tayasir and travel through the Tayasir Checkpoint, one of the Israeli military checkpoints controlling Palestinian access into the Jordan Valley from the North. Fadi tells us: *"Getting through the checkpoint takes a long time. A lot of workers are trying to get into the Jordan Valley through either Al Hamra or Tayasir checkpoints"*.

Work begins at 6am. The Palestinians work a 7 and a half hour day with a half hour break. No pay is received for the break.

Fares and Jammal are paid 65 NIS (about £11.50) for a day, or roughly 8.12 NIS per hour, well under half the Israeli minimum wage. Younes is paid 65-70 NIS a day.

According to Fadi, none of the workers in Beit Ha'Arava

receive any sick pay and only 10 out of the 200 workers he arranges to work in Beit Ha'Arava have any health insurance. Fadi tells us that these meagre arrangements for health insurance are the only attempts by the settlement farms to provide insurance for sick workers: *"In Na'ama and Mehola there is no health insurance at all"*.

In Beit Ha'Arava the workers we spoke to are not given time off on Muslim holidays, only Jewish ones despite Israeli government stipulations that workers should get religious holidays off according to which religion they practice. They do not receive any paid holiday at all. They also receive no written contracts.

Child labour

Younes has worked six days a week in Beit Ha'Arava since he was 13. *"I work in the greenhouses tending to peppers and tomatoes. I didn't go to school since I was 13."*

Fadi tells us that he arranges for children under the age of 16 to work in the settlements in the Valley. According to Fadi: *"There are 15-23 under 16s working all year round in Beit Ha'Arava and up to 40 in the school holidays. They are employed to pick peppers, chilis, dates and tomatoes."*

Fares tells us: *"Children work alongside me in Beit Ha'Arava. They get the same pay as me and they do the same jobs as the adult workers. They do dangerous work, operating machinery and picking dates."*

Workers pressured to sign away their rights

Trade unions are forbidden in Beit Ha'arava. According to Jammal: *"they will sack us if we even think about unionising."*

One way that the employers try to get around giving workers their legal rights is by requiring workers to sign papers stating that they are being treated properly within the law, when in fact this is far from the case.

Fadi tells us that: *"In Beit Ha'Arava the workers must sign papers saying that they have already received their annual pay rise before they begin working. I give the workers these papers to sign. I don't force anyone to sign them but if they don't they cannot work."*

Other workers report being asked to put an imprint of their fingerprint on an empty sheet of paper, which they suspect is another way of signing away their legal rights.

According to Jammal: *"I signed a paper saying that I had already received all of my annual incremental pay and that the settlement would not be responsible if I get injured while at work"*.

Fadi adds: *"The papers also say that the workers' daily salary is 136 NIS"*.

Dangerous conditions

Jammal tells us: *"I work high up on the trees picking dates. It's dangerous. We have no rope or harness and no helmet. Often people are injured by the spikes on the trees. My brother was injured by a needle from a date palm. He was pushed into the needles by a machine he was using. He had to take two days off and he didn't receive any sick pay."*

According to Younes: *"We use chemicals to spray the date palms but we are not given any masks or protective clothing to wear, the chemicals have made me sick several times. I have not been paid for the time I have been sick."*

Success of the boycott campaign

According to Fadi: *"During the campaign against Agrexco and around the time of the attack on the Mavi Marmara, Beit Ha'Arava produced 2500 tonnes of grapes. Only customers from Russia bought them, while customers from other countries refused. The remaining grapes could only be sold on the local market. A kilo of grapes is exported for 35 NIS but sold locally for only 6 NIS so Beit Ha'Arava lost a lot of money."*

This loss of sale affected the workers. Fadi tells us that the workers only worked 10 day out of 40 during that period. However Fadi says that: *"The campaign was good as when the settlement economy is destroyed the settlers will leave. They are only here for business."*

Fares also supports the boycott campaign:

"They are working on stolen land, using water that they have stolen from us. If the boycott campaign damages these companies then the settlers will leave our land".

We have used pseudonyms in this article to protect our interviewees.

“Everything changes apart from the money”

First published in January 2013

Mohammed, who lives in Fasayil in the middle of the Jordan Valley with his wife, his son and two daughters, has worked in Tomer settlement for the past two years. He began working in the settlement after he met a Palestinian middleman, who worked as a contractor for Tomer, and offered him a seasonal job. He said that “if there was any alternative I would not work there,” but that he needed the money.

He told us that he is paid 70 NIS (about £12.50) a day, has no written contract and receives no sick pay, health insurance or holiday pay. Mohammed had been lucky enough not to have an accident while at work but he said that his employers “*didn’t care*” if someone was injured while at work. He said his employers wouldn’t give him a paid sick day “*even if I was about to die*”.

He has no written contract and told us that some of the people working for the growers in Tomer settlement were under the age of 16, some of them as young as ten.

Mohammed told us that “*everything changes apart from the money*”.

Mohammed is picked up at 6am by the contractor and taken to the settlement. He works primarily in Tomer’s vineyards but has also tended and packed peppers, chilis, sweet peppers, aubergines and cabbages. Most of the time he works in the fields which are situated opposite Fasayil across Road 90 but sometimes he packs the goods into cartons and takes them to the packing houses in Tomer’s gated agricultural area.

Mohammed told us about his work in the vineyards: pruning the vines, collecting the dead leaves and cutting back the new. Some of these leaves are sold on the Palestinian market to traders in Nablus and Jericho and used as food. Then, usually in May, the grapes are picked and sorted, and the best ones are selected for export while the rest goes to the Israeli market.

He told us that “*it is important for you to tell people that these settlements are illegal and that we don’t have any choice except to work for them*”.

Mohammed said he supported the movement for a boycott of Israeli products and was pleased to hear

Activists play with children from the village of Fasayil while the Jordan Valley Solidarity project plants olive trees to reclaim the land on the outskirts of the village





Palestinian homes in the village of Fasayil

about an upcoming international day of action against Israeli agricultural companies: *"I think its important to boycott Israeli products as the settlements are stealing our land and stealing our water."* When asked what he feels about the possibility of losing his job if the boycott is successful and companies in Tomer close down, he said *"it's like a dream, inshallah [God willing], its freedom for the Palestinian people."*

Several people who work in Tomer have told us that some of the products packaged there are mislabelled 'Made in Saudi Arabia'. All of the people we spoke to could only read in Arabic but said that there was writing in Hebrew and English on the settlement packing houses and cartons which they were not able to read.

Mohammed's friends, Suleiman and Abed from Fasayil, told us that the settlements in the north of the Jordan Valley grow olive trees in the area which lies between the Israeli fence, built in 1967, and the meagre trickle of water which is the Jordan River. The area is controlled by the Israeli military who open a gate in the fence at 6am and close it at 2pm. This practice has been documented in the past by Ha'aretz. We were told that Palestinians had been sent to work in this area by their settler employers but that they had been stopped by the army and asked what they were doing there, before being taken to the police station in the settlement of Ma'ale Efraim. Now only non-Palestinians migrant workers work in this area.

We interviewed a 47 year old man named Dawood from

Fasayil, whose family had moved to the Jordan Valley from an area called Hassasia, close to Ein Gedi, which now lies within the West Bank. His family had reared animals, farmed the land and produced salt from the shores of the Dead Sea. After the occupation of 1967 the Israeli military confiscated the family's goats when they strayed into military areas and required the farmers to pay fines in order to get them back. Dawood's uncle was killed by soldiers when he intervened to protect his animals when the army was trying to confiscate them.

In the end, life near the Dead Sea coast became impossible. Dawood moved to the Jordan Valley. He had a herd of eighty goats but was forced to sell most of them as it was too expensive to buy food for them. Dawood still faces Israeli state violence in Fasayil. In 2010 18 tents were destroyed by the Israeli military in Fasayil-al-Wusta where Dawood lives.

Dawood has worked in Tomer for the last eight years, picking and packaging grapes, peppers and dates. He has always found employment through a succession of Palestinian contractors. He is paid 70 NIS a day for 7 and a half hours work. He said that some workers in Tomer, who had asked for a pay rise, were paid 80 NIS. Again, he gets no benefits except for his pay, which is paid to him monthly, and gets no holiday pay or sick pay. He confirmed that he had seen children of 11 or 12 working in Tomer, often performing menial tasks like cleaning the packing houses or collecting rubbish.

Dawood said that he had recently been asked to sign a

Chapter 2: Agricultural Apartheid in the Jordan Valley

document written in Hebrew, which he cannot read. The contractor had told him that this was about his pay and conditions. He said that he was afraid that he might have been dismissed if he didn't sign the document. Workers' rights organisation Kav'LaOved reports that in many cases, employers force their workers to sign documents in Hebrew, relinquishing the rights owed to them, although these documents are, in fact, inadmissible in court.

Ali, who lives in Jiflik, has spent most of his life working in the settlements. For over 26 years he worked in Massua settlement, picking and packing aubergines, grapes, tomatoes and peppers. He was recruited by a Palestinian contractor and, after 9 years as a labourer, he became the contractor dealing directly with the settlers in Massua and receiving money to give to the workers he recruited. Ali told us that Massua marketed its produce through Agrexco and Tnuva.

Ali said that his son also worked in Massua with him. One month, Ali's son took proceedings against their employer over a dispute over pay. As a result Ali was fired, with no notice, and only received the pay due to him after four months had passed. He said that workers in Massua received 80 NIS a day. He said that his employers obviously didn't care about his "long years" working for them.

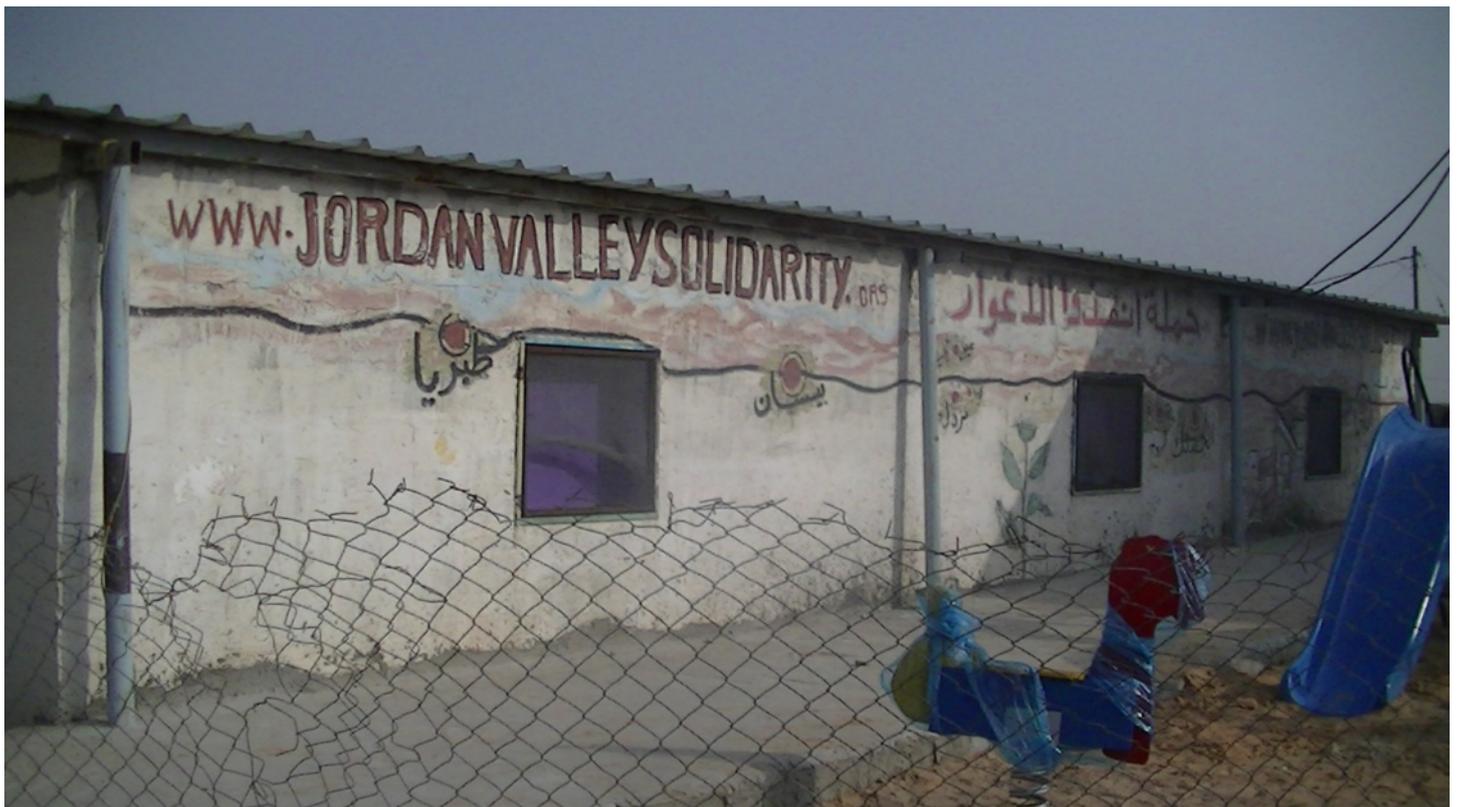
Now Ali works in Na'ama settlement, again working as a middleman and recruiting workers from Tubas, Tammoun and Jericho. The workers are involved in growing watermelons, aubergines and peppers. He told us that workers in Na'ama receive 80 NIS a day, which is paid to him every 15 days by one of the settlers and which he distributes to the workers. Again they receive no sick pay or holiday pay and have no health insurance.

Ashraf, 37, who works with Ali in Na'ama, receives 80 NIS a day and says that it is "not enough". He confirmed that the workers do not receive any benefits at all over and above their daily wage. He told us that when he had injured his hand at work and had to go to hospital his employers did nothing to help him and docked him a day's pay.

Ashraf lives far away from Na'ama but spends most of his time in an isolated house, which he said was "like a barracks", provided by the settlers outside of the settlement boundary. 18 workers live in two rooms, breaching the Israeli government recommendation of no more than six workers per room. They are not allowed visitors and are castigated if they return home after 7pm.

In the Bedouin village of Khan al Ahmar near Mishor Adumim, outside the Jordan Valley, we met Jamal and Mustafah who work in the Southern Jordan Valley settlement of Vered Jericho. Jamal, 33, said he had been

A school built by the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign in the village of Fasayil. The school was built in defiance of Israeli building restrictions. When it was first built it was issued a demolition order by the Israeli military. However, after an international campaign the school was saved.



employed in Vered Yeriho to work from 6am to 2pm for 70 NIS during 2012.

Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements must, in theory, obtain an ID card from the Israeli Civil Administration. We were shown several of these cards which had been obtained from the Civil Administration in Jericho. On top of this, workers must obtain a permit. However, some workers have no documentation whatsoever. Several of our interviewees told us that in the last few years the stipulation for workers to have ID and permits has become more relaxed and suspicions were voiced that this may be to avoid workers being able to prove that they are employed in the settlements to avoid litigation in the labour courts.

Palestinian contractors seem unpopular among the workforce and, although Ali insisted he took no more than a worker's wage, several of our interviewees said that Palestinian contractors are paid a higher wage as well as taking commission from the wages they receive for the workers they recruit. One reason for this may be that the employers in the settlements can show that they are paying contractors, who tend to work in the fields as well as performing a recruiting and overseeing role, in line with Israeli minimum wage legislation.

Either way, the deployment of Palestinian contractors is clearly a strategy used by businesses in the settlements to avoid liability for the working conditions of Palestinian labourers in their farms and packing houses. This strategy has not proven successful in law, however. In 2010 an Israeli court determined that Eitan and Yinon Agriculture Ltd could be jointly liable with their Palestinian contractors in a case regarding pay, conditions and wrongful dismissal.

Although several of our interviewees reported that workers' rights organisations have visited their communities to inform them of their rights, all of them stated that union organising is forbidden in the settlements in the Jordan Valley and that no union representation is available to them.

One small difference we noted was that several of our interviewees reported that they are being paid overtime, often of 10 NIS an hour, for the extra hours that they worked. When Corporate Watch conducted interviews in 2010 workers in agricultural settlements in the Jordan Valley uniformly reported that overtime was not paid and that they were often asked to work extra hours for no extra pay.

In general, we have not noted any difference in workers' pay in these four settlements since 2010, despite the dramatic rises in the Israeli minimum wage. It is a challenge for the international solidarity movement to build effective links with workers in Jordan Valley agricultural settlements and to boycott the companies exploiting this oppressed workforce.



< Children in the Palestinian village of Fasayil

Chapter 3

ISRAELI EXPORT COMPANIES



Israeli agricultural export companies benefit from the seizure of Palestinian land by the Israeli military, from a dependant Palestinian economy created by the Oslo agreements and from a captive workforce, who have no option but to work for low wages and in appalling conditions. Palestinians have called for campaigners to pressure retailers not to source from these suppliers. We include profiles of five of these companies in this briefing as a resource for the BDS movement.

Arava

Arava Export Growers is one of Israel's biggest agricultural companies. It was established in 1991, after a decision by the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture to allow growers in the Arava region to form their own independent export company.¹ Arava supplies fruit, vegetables and herbs worldwide, including through its Dutch and American subsidiaries.

Produce

Arava specialises in different types of pepper but also grows and supplies avocado, grapes, peaches, nectarines, citrus fruit, plums, pomegranates, sharon fruit, strawberries, carrots, celery, tomatoes and cherry tomatoes, radishes, chillies, passion fruits, fresh figs, pitayas, kumquats and limequats, potatoes and a wide variety of herbs.²

Arava in the Gaza Strip

As a result of the Israeli siege, exports from the Gaza Strip remain minimal and totally dependant on Israel, with any exports of Palestinian produce having to be carried out through Israeli companies. Before its liquidation in 2011 most produce from Gaza was exported through Carmel Agrexco's Coral brand but, according to farmers and exporters, Arava now carries the majority of their trade, including most of the produce from the Palestinian brand Palestine Crops. Produce gets labelled both with the Palestinian brand name and a bigger Arava logo, with the Palestinian traders having to pay Arava a commission of 7-10%. The majority of Palestinian exports through Arava consist of strawberries and herbs.⁸

Resistance

Arava has been one of the targets for campaigners focusing on Israeli agricultural produce in the UK. It was one of four companies that the Co-op dropped in 2012, when the supermarket became the first UK chain to stop dealing with any supplier of produce known to be sourcing from illegal Israeli settlements. Since then, the Sainsbury's Taste the Indifference Campaign⁹ has been campaigning both at branches across the country and at the company's AGMs to demand that the same action is taken by Sainsbury's, which sources produce from Arava. During a day of action against Israeli agricultural companies in 2011, protesters visited Mill Associates, the then UK sales office for Arava, to confront them about their business practices and association with occupation profiteers. According to David Crossland, the managing director of Mill Associates, all links between the two have now been discontinued and Mill Associates have "no contact with them [Arava] whatsoever"¹⁰



An Arava packing house in Tomer settlement in the Jordan Valley

Arava in the West Bank

Although Arava was set up to export from the Arava region, on the Israeli side of the Green Line, there is plenty of evidence that the company operates from illegal settlements in the West Bank. It exports produce from Jordan River Herbs, which is based in the illegal Jordan Valley settlement of Mechola, and Corporate Watch researchers have observed Arava packing houses and signage in the settlements of Gilgal, Netiv Hagdud³, Ro'i⁴ and Beit Ha'Arava.⁵ In all instances, Arava packaging and labels found in the settlements in the occupied West Bank were mislabelled by Arava as produce of Israel.

According to the Israeli research group Who Profits, Arava also exports fruit and vegetables from occupied East Jerusalem⁶ and since 2005 the company has sourced some produce from growers in other countries⁷.

< Packing houses of Israeli export companies in the Aravot-Ha'Yarden Regional Council, a settlement in the central Jordan Valley

Ownership

50% of Arava is owned by B. Gaon Holdings and Hamashbir Holdings and 50% is owned by farmers in the Arava region inside Israel and by Jordan River Herbs.¹¹ Jordan River Herbs is located in the illegal settlement of Mechola in the occupied Jordan Valley. B. Gaon Holdings is traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE)

Subsidiaries

Arava USA Inc, established in 1997, serves the US and Canadian market. Address: Arava USA Inc. 788 Shrewsbury Ave. Suite 2221 Tinton Falls, NJ 07724.

Arava Holland B.V, established in 1996, serves the EU market. Address: Klappolder 170, 2665 MP Bleiswijk, The Netherlands.

Arava Russia

Arava's website states that the company also operates a sales office in the UK.

Addresses

Website <http://www.arv.co.il/>

Head office

Negev St, Bereker #2, POB 1026 Airport city, 70100, Israel.

Arava Export Growers

2 HaMa'ayan Street, P.O Box 296, Modi'in 7171102, Israel.

Brand names

Arava

Arava Bio for organic produce

Endnotes

1. <http://www.arv.co.il/about>
2. http://www.arv.co.il/products?product_category=0
3. Netiv Hagdud and Gilgal <http://corporateoccupation.org/netiv-hagdud-and-gilgal/>
4. Companies trading from Ro'i settlement in the Jordan Valley <http://corporateoccupation.org/companies-trading-from-roi-settlement-in-the-jordan-valley/>
5. Poverty wages and child labour in the settlement of Beit Ha'Arava: Conditions for settlement workers in the Jordan Valley – Part two <http://corporateoccupation.org/poverty-wages-and-child-labour-in-the-settlement-of-beit-haarava-conditions-for-settlement-workers-in-the-jordan-valley-part-two/>
6. Made in Israel: Agricultural Exports from Occupied Territories, p 41 by Who Profits http://www.whoprofits.org/sites/default/files/made_in_israel_web_final.pdf
7. <http://www.arv.co.il/about>
8. Trading under siege: the dying export industry in the Gaza Strip <http://corporateoccupation.org/trading-under-siege-the-dying-export-industry-in-the-gaza-strip/>
9. Sainsbury's Campaign <http://www.sainsburyscampaign.org/>
10. From a Corporate Watch email conversation with Mill Associates' managing director David Crossland 7/1/2016
11. <http://whoprofits.org/company/arava-export-growers>



Arava export labels being used to package Gazan strawberries in Beit Lahiya in 2013. Arava benefits from the captive market created by the siege of Gaza

Mehadrin

According to Mehadrin’s own reckoning, the company “is Israel’s largest grower and exporter of citrus, fruits and vegetables, and is a leading global supplier of the Jaffa brand. With over 8,500 hectares of agricultural holdings, Mehadrin is trusted by many of Europe’s best retail chains”! These retail chains include UK supermarkets Tesco, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s, and the French chain Grand Frais.^{2,3,4}

Over 70% of Mehadrin products are exported and the company has offices in the UK, France, Holland, Sweden (serving Scandinavia), Switzerland and the US. Annual sales are approximately \$400 million, with Israeli citrus and fruit exports in 2013 totalling \$495 million.⁵ Mehadrin has become the dominant player in its field, especially since the demise of Carmel Agrexco.

A publicly traded company since the 1960s, Mehadrin Group is a conglomerate controlling all aspects of its supply chain from seed to packaging. Predominantly selling produce through Mehadrin Tnuport Exports (MTEX), the company has repeatedly been caught mislabelling produce grown in West Bank settlements as ‘Produce of Israel’.⁶ In 2013, Corporate Watch researchers documented examples of mislabelling on Mehadrin boxes at a packing house in the Jordan Valley settlement of Beqa’ot.⁷

Mehadrin do not hide their presence in the occupied territories. A map on the company’s website shows it owns at least three orchards in the West Bank and one in Gaza.^{8,9} Mehadrin also operates a packing house for grapes in Beqa’ot and sources the crop from another Jordan Valley settlement, Massua. Mehadrin packaging was also found in Tomer and Na’aran settlements.¹⁰

Corporate Watch has also found exploitative conditions for Palestinian employees that work on settlements supplying Mehadrin.¹¹ Three of four workers interviewed in 2010 stated they were paid 56 NIS (Israeli Shekels) per day compared to the Israeli minimum wage – at the time – of 160NIS. The Israeli minimum wage is supposed to apply to the settlements.

Resistance

Mehadrin have been targeted as part of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and its links to British supermarkets have been challenged by activists in the UK. In 2011 BDS activists delivered rotten fruit and vegetables – alongside empty water bottles – to the Mehadrin UK offices in Borehamwood to protest the company’s complicity in the theft of land and water from Palestinians in the West Bank.¹²

Mehadrin was also one of four companies dropped by the Cooperative in 2012¹³ when the supermarket became the first UK chain to cease dealing with any supplier known to source produce from illegal West Bank settlements. The Sainsbury’s BDS campaign, which calls on the UK supermarket to sever its ties with companies sourcing from the West Bank, has been concentrating on Mehadrin in its campaign.

Ownership

Mehadrin is owned by Property and Building Corp, part of the IBD Group (45.41%), and Pheonix (41.42%), which is part of the Delek Group owned by real-estate mogul Yitzhak Tshuva (chairman of the El-Ad group, which owns New York Plaza Hotel).¹⁴

Mehadrin and Delek Group are traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) and Delek US trades on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).



> A Mehadrin packing house in Beqa’ot

Addresses

Head Office: Mehadrin Tnuport Export L.P, Power Center 1, Be'erot Yitzaq 60905. Tel: +972 (0) 393 71371.

Email: export@mtex.co.il.

Mehadrin UK: 3 Pentacourt, Station Road, Borehamwood, WD6 1SL.

Tel: +44 (0) 203 114 3030. Email: info@mtexuk.com.

Mehadrin USA: 955 East Hazelwood Avenue, Rashway, New Jersey 07065. Tel: +1 732 88 26964.

Email: team@mehadrin-usa.com.

Mehadrin France: Meadrin International, 696 Chemin du Barret, 13160 Chateurenard. Tel: +33 (0) 432 60 62 90.

Email: contact@mehadrin-inter.com.

Mehadrin Holland: Handelscentrum ZHZ 40-C, 2991 LD Barendrecht.

Tel: +31 (0) 180 642 570. Email: sales@mtex.nl.

Mehadrin Sweden: Mehadrin Tnuport Scandinavia AB, Vastra Hamngatan 13 A, 411 17 Gotenborg. Tel: +46 (0) 31 134 932.

Email: office@mtscand.com.

Subsidiaries/Sister Companies

STM Agricultural Exports (50% ownership)

Topgro UK (50% ownership)

Mehadrin Central Europe (50% ownership)

Miriam Shoham (50% ownership) – owns a packing house for mangoes in the occupied Golan Heights¹⁵

Endnotes

1. 'About Us' page on Mehadrin website. Available from: <http://www.mehadrin.co.il/docs/P124/>

2. 'Check The Label – Boycott Israeli Produce', Friends of Al-Aqsa (2015). Available from: <http://www.foa.org.uk/campaigns/boycott-israeli-produce>

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5. 'Israel: Fresh and processed food export \$2.4 billion', Agro Mashov (2013). Available from:

[http://agro.mashovgroup.net/en/%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D/Israel:%20Fresh%20and%20processed%20food%20export%20\\$2.4%20billion/](http://agro.mashovgroup.net/en/%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D/Israel:%20Fresh%20and%20processed%20food%20export%20$2.4%20billion/)

6. 'Mehadrin: New evidence of mislabeled settlement produce', Corporate Watch (2013). Available from:

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Hadiklaim



Established in 1982, Hadiklaim is an Israeli date growers' co-operative that deals with several major supermarkets in the UK, including Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Morrisons and Waitrose. It exports to 30 countries. Tesco and Marks & Spencers' own-branded dates are Hadiklaim produce. The company also supplies dates to Migros.

Hadiklaim exports under the King Solomon Dates and Jordan River brand names and its products are marketed by Almog Tradex. The company boasts that its growers and packing houses “*have approvals from international standard setting bodies – ISO, BRC, EUREPGAP, Bio USDA and IFOAM – as well as the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and the Israeli Bio -*

Organic Agriculture Association.”

Indeed, its produce is often certified as organic in the UK market. But, though the company highlights its growers inside Israel, it also works from the illegal settlements of Beit Ha’Arava and Tomer, Almog, Massua, Mechola, Gilgal, Hamra, Kalia, Yafit and Mitzpe Shalem in the Jordan Valley. The company also sources from settlements in the Occupied Syrian Golan.

Hadiklaim specialises in Medjoul dates, the kind most frequently used by Muslims for breaking their fast in Ramadan. Boycott campaigns against Israeli dates have run for the many years around the Islamic holy month.

After consumers started to question the origins of Hadiklaim date boxes labelled ‘Produce of South Africa’, it came to light that Karsten Farms, a South African company, was exporting dates through Hadiklaim. After a three year

long campaign by the Palestine Solidarity Alliance and BDS South Africa, Karsten announced in 2013 that they would sever all ties with Hadiklaim.¹

Aerial transportation for Hadiklaim is provided by British Airways, CAL and El Al. Shipping services are provided by Zim and Maersk.²

Address

6 Harutz Street, Tel Aviv, 67060, Tel: 972-3-6389555, hadiklaim@hadiklaim.co.il
www.hadiklaim.com

Brand names

King Solomon, Jordan River, Jordan River Bio-Top, Supermarket's own brand names.

Endnotes

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Above: Palestinian workers pick dates atop date palm in dangerous conditions near the Israeli settlement of Kalia in the southern Jordan Valley

Carmel Agrexco



Carmel Agrexco was previously the largest exporter of goods from Israel's settlements in the West Bank. However, the company was liquidated in 2011. According to Israeli economist Shir Hever,¹ the intense BDS campaign against the company was a factor in Agrexco's misfortunes. The Agrexco brandname continues to exist, currently owned by Gideon Bickel of Bickel Flowers.

According to a February 2016 article by Hamodia,² *"the company's trustees informed the Tel Aviv District Court on Sunday 7 February that they ran out of fruit and vegetables two weeks ago and would not be renewing stocks. The company will now specialise in two areas – storage and customs clearing of exported fruits and vegetables at Ashdod Port."* The company now has only 19 employees and is massively in debt.

Agrexco was the target of an international BDS campaign which featured regular blockades of its UK warehouse, direct action against the import of Agrexco goods to Belgium and mass protests against Agrexco's operations in Montpellier, France.

Address

Hahoma 12, Rishon Letzion 75655. Tel: 03-5630999

www.agrexco.com

Brand names

Carmel, Carmel Bio Top (organic produce) and Jaffa.

Subsidiaries include

Agrexco (France), Agrexco (US), Carmexco (Italy), Eclectic, Carmel Cor, LACHS, Dalia (Germany).

Above: An old picture of a Carmel Agrexco packing house close to the Dead Sea in the southern Jordan Valley.

Left: Demonstrators blockade Carmel Agrexco's distribution warehouse in Hayes, Middlesex in 2006. Agrexco was forced to close its UK warehouse after the company was liquidated in 2011.



Endnotes

- <http://bdsmovement.net/2011/palestinian-civil-society-welcomes-agrexco-liquidation-calls-for-celebration-of-this-bds-victory-8096>
- <http://hamodia.com/2016/02/08/agrexco-broke-no-more-fruit-veg-exports-trustees-say/>

Edom and Valley Grown Salads

Edom UK is an Israeli company (despite the name) partly owned by the British company Valley Grown Salads (VGS). EDOM have supplied mangoes to Sainsburys in the past.¹

Since 2009, Edom UK has established a large packing house close to the tiny agricultural moshav of Sapir, in the Arava region inside Israel's 1948 borders. Confirmed destinations for produce from this location are Europe - including the UK - USA and Russia, with only a small percentage going to the local Israeli market. A large proportion of the workers at EDOM's Sapir packing house are Thai migrant workers.

In 2010 Corporate Watch visited Tomer settlement and found evidence that EDOM was exporting from Tomer. Researchers obtained boxes from a packing house in Tomer bearing the EDOM logo, photographed a truck bearing EDOM signage picking up goods from the settlement and a packing house bearing an EDOM sign. Corporate Watch wrote an open letter to VGSs, which has part ownership of EDOM, pointing out that Tomer was established on Palestinian land, is illegal under international law and that the British government's position is that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are unlawful. In response Jimmy Russo, director of VGS and Chairman of EDOM, pledged that EDOM and VGS would not trade with the settlements in the future.

In 2011 activists from Brighton Jordan Valey Solidarity delivered a letter to VGS's office in Essex, demanding the company "*distance themselves from practices of exploitation and occupation profiteering*".²

In January 2013 Corporate Watch researchers acquired EDOM branded packaging which had been taken from Tomer settlement. The packaging had been mislabelled as coming from a kibbutz in 1948 Israel. We also observed EDOM cherry tomatoes being packaged in the settlement of Beit Ha'arava.³ In response to this evidence, Jimmy Russo, the company's Chairman, announced that he planned to resign from his chairmanship and actively seek to sell his 20% shareholding in the Israeli company.⁴ However, the Valley Grown Salads website still states that it is a joint owner of EDOM.⁵

Later in 2013, EDOM UK made another statement, this time to Who Profits,⁶ that it would not be sourcing goods

from settlements in the future. However, EDOM's poor track record of labelling settlement goods as 'produce of Israel' makes this statement less credible.

Palestinian civil society movements have called for divestment from Israeli companies. Glinwell PLC, Valley Grown Salads and Magnolia UK holdings should follow this call and divest from EDOM UK.

Ownership

As of 24 April 2014, 20% of company shares were held by the Glinwell PLC (UK), 20% were held by the Valley Grown Salads (UK), 30% by Chosen Agricultural Products from the Arava (owned by Israeli farmers from the Arava region) and 30% by Magnolia UK Holdings (owned by Yaron Yarchi and Yinon Horesh).⁷

Subsidiary

Edom Fruits.

Address

65 Yigal Alon St. Tel Aviv 67443.

Tel: 972-3-6335333

www.edom.co.il

Valley Grown Salads' UK office and packing house

Nazelow Nursery, Sedge

Green Road, Roydon,

Essex CM19 5JS.

Phone: 01992 445000



Corporate Watch entered a packing house in the settlement of Beit Ha'Arava in the Jordan Valley in 2013. We found these cherry tomatoes being packaged for Edom. They are labelled 'Made In Israel' despite being from the occupied West Bank.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.boycottisraelnetwork.net/?p=2169>
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3. <https://corporateoccupation.org/edom-still-sourcing-products-from-tomer-settlement/>
4. <https://corporateoccupation.org/bds-victory-edoms-chairman-promises-to-resign-and-divest-shares/>
5. <http://www.v-g-s.co.uk/about/>
6. <http://whoprofits.org/company/edom-uk>
7. As above

Chapter 4

UK SUPERMARKETS

Agricultural products from the besieged Gaza Strip, occupied West Bank and Syrian Golan are sold in UK supermarkets. BDS campaigners have been pressuring supermarkets to boycott Israeli goods for many years. Many campaigners have adopted an incremental approach, calling on retailers to make a first step of boycotting goods from Israel's settlements in the West Bank and Syrian Golan, and not sourcing from companies who play a part in the settler economy, such as Mehadrin, Arava and Hadiklaim.

In 2009, after intense pressure from campaigners, the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) issued new guidelines regarding the labelling of products being imported to Britain from the West Bank. The guidelines state that

“the Government considers that traders would be misleading consumers, and would therefore almost certainly be committing an offence, if they were to declare produce from the OPT (including from the West Bank) as 'Produce of Israel'”.

Since then supermarkets have introduced a 'West Bank' label for produce sourced from Israeli settlements. However, there are many documented examples of suppliers labelling produce from Israeli settlements as 'Israeli' produce.



Tesco

The UK's largest retailer has a tarnished history when it comes to stocking produce grown in illegal West Bank settlements. In 2007, UK activists entered the agricultural settlement of Tomer in the occupied Jordan Valley and photographed medjoul dates packed by Carmel Agrexco, labelled as 'Made in Israel' and as bound for Tesco stores.

The discovery led to an ITN expose in the same year, accusing supermarkets of misleading British consumers. Tesco admitted it had acted “*in error*” and stated that Israeli dates “*originating solely from the West Bank will [in the future] be labelled as such*”. Tesco continued to source dates from West Bank settlements, and label them as such, until at least Christmas 2013 when Tesco own-brand 'King Solomon' medjoul dates appeared in UK stores labelled “*West Bank (Israeli Settlement Produce)*”¹. Tesco were also selling own brand fresh basil labelled as West Bank produce in 2009.²

In 2014 the supermarket announced it would no longer be selling products originating from the West Bank, beginning from September of that year. According to the Jewish Chronicle, a spokesman from the chain said the move was not “*politically motivated*”.³ Tesco continue to sell medjoul dates from Israel and a range of other Israeli produce – ranging from avocados to bell peppers and cut thyme.

However, the supermarket still stocks other products from the settlement industry. Zion Fine Wines, whose wines can be bought from stores with a Kosher section, operate out of Mishor Adumim, an industrial area located in the sprawling Ma'ale Adumim settlement.⁴ Grapes for Zion Fine Wines are grown in a number of areas including the 'Judean Hills', the Israeli term for the hills of the southern West Bank.

Tesco is also the sole UK provider of Jaffa citrus, the Israeli brand which is linked to Mehadrin and Carmel Agrexco. Jaffa products used to be sourced solely from Israel, but now also come from Spain and a select few other countries. A 2011 article in the Jewish Chronicle claimed that the “*brand name Jaffa could only be used by Tesco on citrus fruits approved by the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture when the Israeli fruit is out of season*”.⁵ The same article also noted that at the time Tesco was “*believed to pay the Citrus Marketing Board of Israel NIS 1 million (£168,000) per season for the use of its brand*”. The situation today is a less clear, and the Jaffa UK website – which is adorned with Tesco branding – states that only Offri clementines and oranges come from Israel.⁶

Contact: CEO Dave Lewis - dave.lewis@uk.tesco.com



< Campaigners protest outside of Tesco in Ireland.
Photo from irishantiwar.org

Waitrose

Waitrose has been obstinate in its stance on settlement produce and was unresponsive to the 2007 ITN and More 4 reports which led other supermarkets to label their goods more clearly.

While campaigners have repeatedly tried to engage with the supermarket on the issue, the company has refused to enter into any debate and told one customer: *“Whatever our own views may be about Israeli products, we do not think it is right to ask our buyers to base their choice of products on any other criteria than commercial ones of quality and value for money”*.⁷ This seems to be a very clear message from Waitrose that economic factors take precedent over matters of international law and human rights when it comes to business dealings.

In 2010 an investigation by War on Want discovered that Waitrose was selling a number of settlement goods – despite the supermarket making statements to the contrary – including three types of halva by the company Achva, all of which were clearly labelled as produced in the Barkan settlement in the West Bank.⁸

Waitrose has previously stocked a range of products from Carmel Agrexco, including a wide variety of organic herbs and vegetables, grown on Israeli settlements and certified as organic by the Soil Association.

Like Sainsbury's and ASDA, Waitrose currently source grapefruits from Mehadrin and Galilee Export. They also sell Nicola new potatoes grown by Hevel Maon, an agricultural co-operative based in the Naqab (Negev), an area within Israel's 1948 borders where ethnic cleansing of Paletinian communities is currently taking place.

Waitrose also stocks Hadrawi dates sourced from Hadiklaim.⁹ In stocking produce from Hadiklaim it is clear that Waitrose are happy to buy produce from a company that is involved in the settlement economy.¹⁰

Contact: Mark Price, Managing Director - mark_price@waitrose.co.uk

Aldi

In 2009, Aldi was caught out selling grapefruits from Israeli company Carmel Agrexco labelled as a product of Cyprus.¹¹ The scam led to the German supermarket publicly admitting it had effectively misled European consumers.

This may well have been a deliberate decision based on boycotts of Israeli goods in the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Gaza in December 2008.¹² Other Israeli produce sold by Aldi includes radishes and peppers.¹³

In 2013 Aldi's Dutch subsidiary informed suppliers it was no longer willing to sell produce from Israeli settlements.¹⁴ The ban puts the onus on the suppliers to verify the origin of items marked 'Made in Israel', a procedure which is obviously still open to abuse. The decision was clearly the result of boycott related publicity. According to the Times of Israel, a spokesperson from Aldi stated that the company was not interested in its products *“being part of public discourse in any way”*.¹⁵ Within days of the announcement other representatives of the company's Dutch subsidiary were claiming: *“Aldi would like to emphatically state that it does not boycott products from the occupied territories.”*¹⁶





< Campaigners call for a boycott of Israeli goods outside Waitrose (picture kindly provided by Brighton & Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign)

The Co-operative

In April 2012 the Co-operative supermarket announced that it would **“no longer engage with any supplier of produce known to be sourcing from the Israeli settlements”**.¹⁷ This meant that, not only would the company not stock products produce in the settlements – a policy it had adopted in 2009 – but it would not deal with any businesses operating in the settlements, regardless of whether the products being sold were from the Occupied Territories or not.

According to the Co-op the “decision had an impact on four suppliers, and circa £350,000 of trade”.¹⁸ This made the company the first major supermarket in Europe to take such a step.¹⁹ The Israeli suppliers impacted were Agrexco, Arava Export Growers, Adafresh and Mehadrin.

The Co-op's decision was made after a concerted campaign by BDS campaigners who went to the Co-operative's local and regional meetings over a period of several years, pushing for a change in policy.

However, the Co-op was also very careful to stress that the move was not a boycott of Israeli business, saying they **“continue to have supply agreements with some twenty Israeli suppliers that do not source from the settlements, a number of which may benefit from a transfer of trade”**.



Obviously these companies, whilst not directly aiding the settlement economy, still pay taxes to the Israeli government and some of those taxes undoubtedly go towards funding the infrastructure of Israel's oppressive occupation in the West Bank and siege on Gaza. This pales in comparison to the Co-operative's stance on the South African anti-apartheid movement, where they supported an all out boycott of South African goods.²⁰ Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the first black bishop of Cape Town, has repeatedly likened Israel's treatment of Palestinians as akin to apartheid.²¹ The next step is persuading the Co-op to support a full boycott of all Israeli goods.

The Co-operative (The Co-operative Food Branch) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Sainsbury's



BDS activists demonstrate outside Sainsbury's in Brighton. Photos provided by Brighton & Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Like its competitor Tesco, Sainsbury's has previously sold produce that the supermarket knew was from illegal West Bank settlements. In 2008 activists took photographs of Sainsbury's SO Organic and Taste the Difference medjoul dates clearly labelled 'Grown in West Bank' and grown by the Jordan Valley settlements of Netiv Hagdud and Masua.

In 2009 the SO Organic packaging was changed to simply say 'Origin –West Bank' with no mention of whether they were grown in a settlement or not. In 2016, SO Organic medjoul dates sold on the Sainsbury's website are labelled as a product of either the US or Israel and, in light of the DEFRA guidelines on the labelling of produce from the West Bank, it would appear that the company has stopped sourcing these dates from West Bank settlements. However, Israeli suppliers' history of mislabelling settlement produce means that this may not be the case.

Whilst it is not clear which company Sainsbury's currently sources its Mejdool dates from, the supermarket has previously been linked with Israeli date-grower co-operative Hadiklaim (known for their mislabelling of settlement produce, as covered in the Morrisons profile). Sainsbury's source their white and red grapefruits from Mehadrin – as do ASDA and Waitrose – and labels on the boxes suggest that these are packaged in Mehadrin's packing houses in the Israeli towns of Netivot and Beit Shean in the southern and northern parts of the country respectively. The Israeli company Mehadrin is a major supplier to the UK supermarket chain.²² Other Israeli produce sold by Sainsbury's

include bell peppers, avocados and figs.



For information about the BDS campaign against Sainsbury's, go to www.sainsburyscampaign.org

Morrisons



In January 2013 Corporate Watch obtained packaging labels from the Israeli settlement of Tomer for Morrisons own brand Medjoul dates.²³ The dates were to be exported to the UK by Israeli date growers co-operative Hadiklaim – a company Morrisons continues to source Medjoul dates from.²⁴

When presented with the evidence, a Morrisons media officer claimed the chain “does not source goods from the Occupied Palestinian territories”.²⁵ After looking into the issue further, Morrisons issued a statement about the Tomer labels:

“We do not source any products from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the West Bank. The medjoul dates in question are grown in and sourced from Israel and always have been. Exceptionally, these dates were packed in Tomer while an alternative site was found and although the information on the label was legally correct we recognise it was not in the spirit of the country of origin claim. Since this time our medjoul dates have been packed, as well as grown and sourced, in the state of Israel.”

As the Corporate Watch article written at the time notes, the idea that dates were grown in Israel and packed in Tomer appears implausible.²⁶ Hadiklaim has several packing houses in Israel so it seems unlikely that the company would drive dates grown in Israel into the occupied Jordan Valley for packing. And regardless, Hadiklaim did not see a problem in using an illegal settlement to pack its produce. Morrisons continues to sell Medjoul and Deri dates sourced from Hadiklaim; in January 2016 loose Medjoul dates from the company were imported via Univeg.

Other companies through which Morrisons source Israeli produce include Lincolnshire-based Sunfresh Produce, who supply Israeli organic bell peppers, and Global Pacific Produce UK, who supply avocados. These companies could also be potential targets in any BDS campaign against Morrisons.

Israeli produce sold: Samphire, avocados, medjoul dates (Hadiklaim), organic bell peppers and green chili peppers (Aviv).

Contacts: CEO - Dalton.philips - ceo@morrisonspc.co.uk

Senior buyer for Produce & Horticulture, Drew Kirk - Drew.Kirk@morrisonspc.co.uk

Senior buyer for Core Grocery & World Foods, Jon Downes - Jon.Downes@morrisonspc.co.uk

Marks and Spencer



Until 2008 M&S openly sold products from illegal Israeli settlements. The Guardian reported in 2004 that the company stocked an extensive range of settlement products. Since 2007, however, M&S has made repeated statements claiming that it does not stock goods from the occupied territories.²⁷

In 2008, the store wrote: *"We do not buy products from the West Bank, Golan Heights or Gaza as we cannot safely visit the suppliers in these areas because of the current security situation."* It seems probable that the move to cease selling settlement products was, in fact, due to effective campaigning, protests and fear of adverse press coverage. However, the store continues to stock Israeli goods, including goods sourced from companies that operate in Israel's settlements in the West Bank.

M&S continues to stock Hadiklaim dates packaged as an M&S own brand product.²⁸ In correspondence with the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2008, David Gregory, Technical Food Director for M&S, stated the following:

"In the past, we have sold dates from this region. However, we made a policy decision sometime ago to cease all purchases from this area. However, our UK suppliers do buy raw material (dates) from the organisation Hadiklaim on our behalf. The contract explicitly prohibits purchase from Palestinian Territories and Hadiklaim source the dates from elsewhere within Israel to satisfy our requirements. Traceability systems are in place to confirm the source of the dates."

However, Gregory's response does not take into account that by stocking goods from Hadiklaim, even if the dates stocked by M&S are from within Israel's 1948 borders, they are supporting a company which operates in Israel's settlements in the Jordan Valley and heavily exploits the Palestinian workforce, who are paid a pittance to do dangerous work high up on date palms.

M&S has stocked Israeli grapes, lychees, figs, plums, dates, fresh herbs, sweet potatoes and potatoes. The store currently stocks Israeli Recanati wine²⁹ from Givat

Yishayahu, a moshav (a Hebrew word for a co-operative farm) established on the land of the Palestinian village of 'Ajjur, which was ethnically cleansed in 1948.³⁰ The store also stocks underwear manufactured by Delta Galil,³¹ a company which operates a factory on the Barkan settlement industrial zone.³²

Historically, Marks & Spencer has made statements in support of Zionism. Lord Sieff, chairman and founder of M&S who died in 2001, made several statements in support of Israel's military policies. In 1941, Sieff said that *"large sections of the Arab population of Palestine should be transplanted to Iraq and other Middle-Eastern Arab States"* (Jewish Chronicle, 21/09/1941). In 1990, Sieff, in a book entitled *On Management: The Marks and Spencer Way*, wrote that one of the fundamental objectives of M&S was to *"aid the economic development of Israel."*

There have been no reports of M&S openly showing ideological support for Israel since 2004. The retail company has repeatedly asserted that *"[it has] no 'special' relationship with any government, political party or religious group"* but accepts that M&S does *"make representations to governments in support of [its] commercial aims."* M&S management has not, to our knowledge, commented on Lord Sieff's remarks in support of Zionism and has not made a statement as to whether the current management stands by them.

In 1998, Sir Richard Greenbury, then CEO of Marks & Spencer, received the Jubilee Award from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In 2000, the Jerusalem Report stated that *"M&S supports Israel with \$233 million in trade each year."*

In October 2000, the Jewish Chronicle reported that the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce (B-ICC) had held meetings at Marks & Spencer's offices in Baker Street and in December 2004, Stuart Rose, CEO of Marks and Spencer at the time, was a listed speaker at the annual dinner of the B-ICC.

M&S has faced sustained protests due to their historical ideological support for the Israeli state and because of their policy of stocking Israeli goods.

Email: customer.services@marks-and-spencer.com

ASDA

ASDA currently sells Israeli wine from Carmel, Kedem and Palwin. They also sells pretzels supplied by Schar, and various Mehadrin products, including grapefruits.³³

In the past, ASDA has sold Israeli basil, tarragon, rosemary, sage, chives, dill, mint, thyme, passion fruit, mangoes, blackfine plums, autumn red plums, medjoul dates, dragon fruit, pomegranates, avocados, organic sweet potatoes, sweet pointed peppers (red), sweet potatoes, frozen meat, biscuits, table wine (red, white, rose & sparkling), tinned grapefruit, Keter Plastic garden storage units and Dead Sea mud, packaged by Montagne Jeunesse.

Since ITN's 2007 report, ASDA has made several statements denying that it stocks goods in its stores from the 'West Bank' (i.e. settlement goods). However, in 2009 ASDA made several ambiguous statements contradicting its earlier stance. A spokesperson from the company wrote:

"I am sure you can imagine it is very difficult for ASDA to take a position on behalf of all our customers over politically controversial issues such as the current conflict you refer to [the occupation of Palestine]. On the sourcing of products from overseas we are always guided by the position of the UK Government and by the European Union on trade policy."

Despite this statement, there is evidence to suggest that ASDA has continued to stock goods from Israel's settlements. For example, in 2009 it was reported that ASDA was stocking Yarden wine, which is bottled in the Israeli occupied Syrian Golan.³⁴

Asda stocks Sodastream fizzy drink makers. Sodastream operated a factory in the settlement of Mishor Adumim, until an international campaign forced it to close. The company has relocated to a new factory in the Naqab (Negev), within Israel's 1948 borders. The company's move to the Naqab was heavily subsidised by the Israeli government. The Israeli state is currently ethnically cleansing the Naqab of its Bedouin Palestinian population.

Campaigners have held many pickets of ASDA stores in Brighton and London since 2009, protesting against the sale of Israeli goods. During the attack on Gaza in 2014, campaigners entered an ASDA store in Belfast and removed all of the Israeli goods from the shelves.³⁵

Address: Great Wilson Street, Leeds LS11 5AD.

Tel: 0113 243 5435



Own brand Israeli goods on sale at ASDA. Photo by boycottisrael.org.uk

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34. <http://www.inminds.co.uk/shopping-can-kill.php>
35. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/belfasts-propalestine-protesters-remove-israeli-goods-from-shelves-of-asda-in-protest-over-gaza-30499929.html>

TAKE ACTION

A broad spectrum of people in Palestine are calling for people all over the world to boycott Israeli goods and take action against Israeli companies. Here's some suggestions of what you can do:

Boycott Israeli goods

Get together with like minded people from your area and form a Palestine solidarity group, or join an existing one

Hold talks and workshops in your area to raise awareness about the Palestinian struggle

Write to supermarkets and pressure them to boycott Israeli goods. Make the case that Israeli export companies profit from the occupation and exploit Palestinian workers and farmers

Visit your local supermarket and deliver a letter to the manager, highlighting the Palestinian call for boycott

Persuade smaller shops in your area to heed the boycott call

Picket shops that sell Israeli goods and leaflet the customers, explaining why the boycott is necessary

Hold occupations of shops selling Israeli goods and take action against the international operations of Israeli export companies

Pressure investors to divest from Israeli companies

Find out where your university, workplace or local council sources from. If they source from Israeli companies then start a campaign to end the contract.

LINKS

Boycott National Committee – www.bdsmovement.net

Jordan Valley Solidarity – www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org

International Solidarity Movements – www.palsolidarity.org

Boycott Israel Network - www.boycottisraelnetwork.net

Sainsburys Taste the Indifference Campaign – www.sainsburycampaign.org

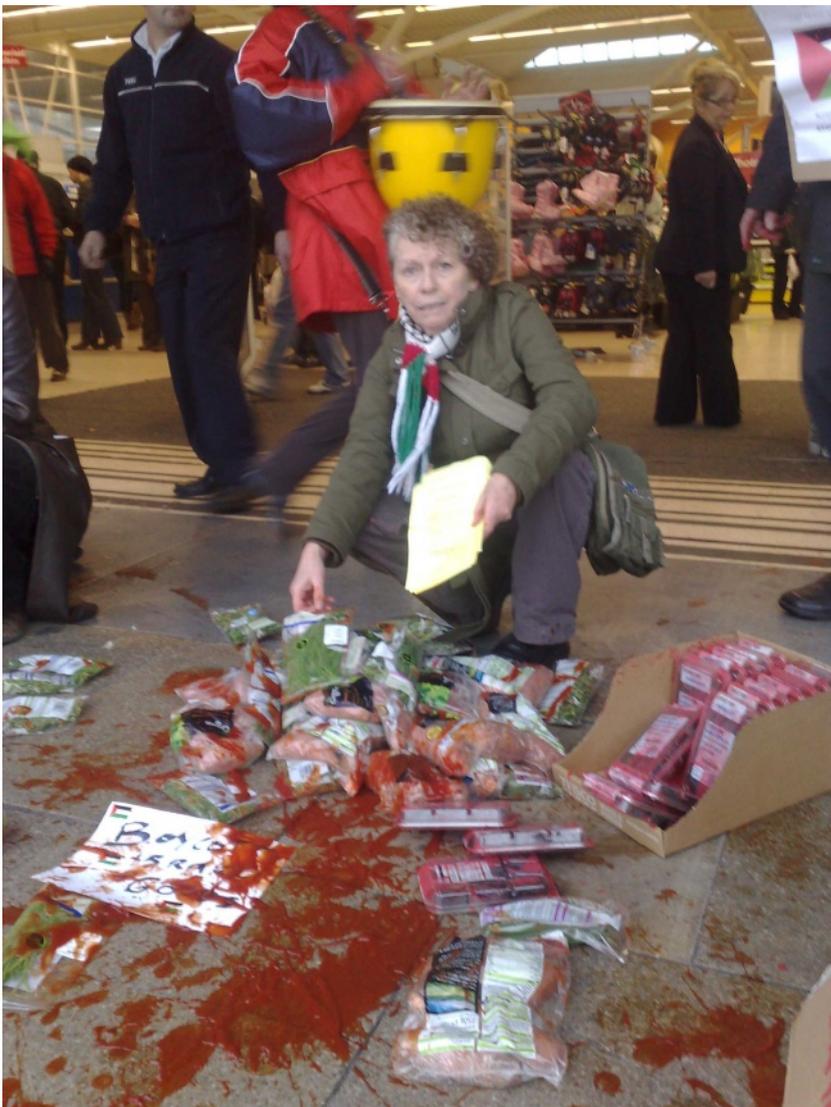
Corporate Watch – www.corporatewatch.org

Corporate Watch's Palestine research blog – www.corporateoccupation.org

Palestine Solidarity Campaign – www.palestinecampaign.org

Who Profits from the Occupation? – www.whoprofits.org

War on Want – www.waronwant.org



< Action against the 2009 bombing of Gaza outside Tesco in Swansea. Grandmother of four, D Murphy, said: "We believe that Tesco are accessories to crimes under international law, under Geneva conventions and UN resolutions signed in our names. By removing these unlawful goods from the shelves, we are enforcing the law, not breaking it. We are asking the people of Wales to support the national boycott of Israeli goods."



Demonstrations in London and Brighton against the attack on Gaza in 2014. Top photo by Michaela Whitton. Bottom photo provided by Brighton and Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign.



Israeli agricultural export companies are profiting from the Israeli colonisation of Palestinian land.

In 2005 a broad coalition of Palestinians made a call for ordinary people all over the world to take action to boycott Israeli goods, companies and state institutions:

“We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organisations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era.”

This call has inspired a global solidarity movement, aimed at targeting Israeli capitalism in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against oppression. We have compiled articles and interviews with Palestinian agricultural workers and farmers, together with information on many of the Israeli exporters and UK supermarkets, as a resource for campaigners seeking to follow this call.

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