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## Popular Resistance in Beita



Since May of this year the people of Beita have been waging a struggle to resist the colonisation by fundamentalist Israeli settlers of a hill above their village, Jabal Abu Sbeih (Mount Sabih).



Beita is a Palestinian town of some 10,000 people, 8 miles southeast of Nablus. It has a long history of resistance to the occupation. Since 1967 more than 77 Beita villagers have been shot dead by Israeli occupation forces. The people of Beita have good reason to fear and resist this latest encroachment onto their land.

In April 1988, a group of 15 youths from the right-wing, fundamentalist settlement of Elon Moreh, 'hiked' through the village's land and provoked the so-called 'Beita Incident'. The group were led by Romam Aldubli, a 26-year-old, violent, religious nationalist. Armed with an Uzi sub-machine gun, Aldubli shot and killed two Beita villagers, Mousa Saleh Bani Shamseh and Hatem Fayez Ahmd al-Jaber. During a struggle to disarm him, he accidentally shot and killed one of the settler teenagers, Tirza Porot.

In the aftermath, the Israeli occupation forces dynamited 15 buildings in Beita. They also killed a sixteen-year-old boy Issam Abdul Halim Mohammad Said and arrested all male adult residents, six of whom were later jailed.

On March 12th 2020 Israeli forces shot dead 15-year-old Mohammed Abed Al-Rahim Hamayel. According to Defence for Children International, Israeli forces, including around 40 military vehicles and two bulldozers, deployed near the Jabal al-Arma area east of Beita around 5.00 am, and clashed with villagers for around two hours. Israeli soldiers fired live ammunition and rubber-coated metal bullets at demonstrators from less than 40 metres away.

Elon Moreh, founded illegally in 1979 by members of the settler movement Gush Emunim, was the first settlement in the northern region of the occupied West Bank. It was soon joined by other fundamentalist settlements, Har Brakha ('83), Yitzhar ('83) and Itamar ('84), The Yitzhar settlement is home to some of the most notoriously violent settlers in the West Bank.





In 2008, a yeshiva student from Yitzhar was arrested after a failed rocket attack on Burin, 10 miles from Beita. After Israeli police demolished a trailer home in Adei Ad, a group of settlers from Yitzhar vandalized cars, smashed windows and cut electricity wires in Burin. From mid-June 2008 to August 2008 the human rights group Yesh Din documented nine attacks on Palestinian families living in Burin allegedly carried out by settlers living in outposts near Yitzhar or Har Brakha.

Just a few kilometers away from Beita, is the town of Duma, where in 2015, a group of Israeli settlers set fire to a Palestinian home, killing three members of the Dawabsheh family, including an 18-month old baby.



On May 3rd this year, a group of settlers supported by the Nahala settlement movement, and with the backing of Samaria Regional Council, occupied Jabal Abu Sbeih. This hill overlooking Beita is designated as part of Area 'C'; it was occupied as an Israeli military camp in the '80s, but later evacuated.

Around the same time as the occupation of Jabal Abu Sbeih, Israeli forces erected another settlement outpost on Mount Al-Arma, north of Beita, on lands belonging to the villagers of Beita, Huwarra, and Za'tara. Their aim is to construct a new settler-only bypass road leading to the Jordan Valley.

The settlers on Jabal Abu Sbeih named the outpost Givat Evyatar, after Evyatar Borovsky, a resident of the settlement of Yitzhar who was allegedly killed by a Palestinian in May 2013. Following his death there were three attempts to build an outpost at the site – in 2013, 2016 and 2018 – but the mobile homes and other structures erected there were evacuated very quickly. This time, within a short period, the settlers had erected some 40 structures. By early June 46 families were already living there.

The residents of Beita and the surrounding villages immediately began waging a campaign of popular resistance. During the day, they have organised gatherings, demonstrations, sit-ins, seminars, speeches and festivals, accompanied by popular chants and traditional nationalist songs, including one specific to the town. They have held weekly Friday prayers and rallies on Jabal Abu Sbeih.

At night, they have been adopting more robust popular resistance methods to create confusion. This includes the use of loudspeakers, flashing lights, lasers, fireworks and burning tyres to produce smoke, so that the settlers and the occupation army units sent to defend them cannot sleep.



On June 7, the Israeli army issued a military order prohibiting the continuation of construction in the outpost on Jabal Sbeih, declaring it a military zone where no presence is allowed, and preventing the entry of building materials to it.

On July 2nd the army evacuated the outpost under an agreement negotiated with the settlers to leave in exchange for a promise to maintain the infrastructure and convert the outpost into a yeshiva. The authorities are now 'looking into the legal status of the land.' The deal foresees the return of the settlers if Israel declares the area state land in the future. Beita and nearby villages have petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court to revoke the terms of the agreement.

Since the beginning of May the Israeli military have shot and killed seven residents of Beita, and another Palestinian youth from nearby Yatma. Jabal Abu Sbeih remains occupied by the Israeli army, and the weekly protests are ongoing.

#### **Friday 14th May**

Dr. Issa Barham is shot dead after he responds to a call from the mosque for volunteers to help evacuate those wounded by Israeli army fire as there aren't enough ambulances. A legal scholar and expert in international law who worked for the prosecutor's office in Salfit, he drove his Hyundai Tucson SUV to the scene, and was shot by an Israeli sniper as he walked towards a group of wounded protestors. He died of a gunshot wound to the stomach.

Zakaria Hamayel (26) a schoolteacher of Arabic, is shot dead while looking for a place to say his afternoon prayers away from the demonstration. A medic wearing the characteristic phosphorescent, hi-viz vest is shot in the thigh as he tries to assist Hamayel.





#### **Friday 1th June**

Mohammed Hamayel (16), a high school student, is shot in the centre of the chest at a distance of a few dozen metres by one of 4 Israeli soldiers spread out on the ground. His cousin is also wounded

Ahmad Bani Shamseh (17) is shot dead. The IDF account says he was killed for throwing an 'explosive device'.

#### **Wednesday 23rd June**

Israeli military bulldozers close all the entrances to Jabal Sabih.

#### **Saturday 27th June**

Two workers for the Beita municipality are injured with rubber-coated rounds. Deputy Mayor Musa Hamayel says that Israeli forces attacked the members of staff as they were trying to reopen the road previously shut down by the Israeli army.

#### **Friday 2nd July**

Israeli soldiers fire rubber-coated metal rounds and stun grenades at Palestinian demonstrators injuring five of them, one of them in the head. An ambulance is also hit by a tear gas canister.

#### **Friday 23rd July**

Palestinian Red Crescent reports that at least 146 Palestinians have been 'injured by live and rubber bullets and tear gas canisters during the confrontations with the occupation in Beita.' The clashes took place several hours after Israeli forces arrived in Beita and reportedly raided a number of houses. Later reports suggest that 320 Palestinians were wounded or suffered from tear gas inhalation.



#### **Tuesday 27th July**

Shadi Omar Salim, Beita's water engineer and plumber, is shot dead by a soldier from the Israeli Kfir Brigade as he stands with a monkey wrench in his hand after going to repair the broken main of the village water supply.

Beita deputy mayor, Mussa Hamayel, says that Israeli soldiers killed Salim as he entered the village on his return from work. 'He was killed in cold blood,' the deputy mayor said, adding that there had been no protests in the area on Tuesday night. Palestinian security sources suggest Salim was killed in an ambush the Israeli army had set up for him at the village's junction.

The Israeli army quickly issued a statement blaming Salim for his own death. The Palestinian victim approached the soldiers in a 'menacing manner', while holding 'what appeared to be an iron bar.' An Israeli spokesperson later stated that he was shot after ignoring warning shots as he charged the soldiers with a wrench in his hand.

#### **Friday 30th July**

Across the West bank 270 Palestinians are wounded in Friday protests, the majority of them in confrontations with Israeli troops during protests in Beita.

The Israeli army told AFP news agency a crowd of about 150 Palestinians in Beita threw rocks and burning tyres at soldiers, who responded 'with riot dispersal means' and rounds of gunfire.

#### **Thursday 5th August**

European Heads of Mission and representatives of West Bank Protection Consortium (WBPC) member states and other like-minded countries visit Beita village.





The delegation includes Heads of Mission and representatives from Belgium, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

A statement by the delegation says the visit took place in response to increasing concerns – across the West Bank and in Beita in particular – about the rising levels of settler violence and to touch upon the worrying establishment of an illegal settlement outpost on top of Jabal Abu Sbeih, on the outskirts of Beita village.

On behalf of the delegation, European Union Representative Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff said:

'For months, the people of Beita have been exposed to serious incidents of settler violence and the building of an illegal Israeli outpost on Mount Sabih, which risks capturing up to 30% of Beita's land. These developments have left many families suffering. Several Palestinians lost their lives, including two children. The policy of settlement construction and expansion in occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law, and Israel must protect the Palestinian population from these violent attacks.'

All participants reiterated their continued strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context.

### **Friday 6th August**

Imad Duikat (38), a father of five, is shot dead with a .22 bullet to the chest while reportedly sipping water from a disposable cup near an ambulance at the protest site. 6 other Beita residents were hit by live fire and over a 100 were injured by tear gas and rubber-tipped metal bullets.

The Palestine Red Crescent ambulance service said 21 other Palestinians, including a cameraman, had been shot by Israeli troops, most of them with rubber-tipped bullets. Others were treated for tear gas inhalation.

The IDF said stones were thrown and tyres burnt in what they termed a 'violent demonstration'. '700 Palestinians gathered south of the Palestinian city of Nablus, burning tyres and throwing rocks and petrol

bombs towards troops and border police. Israeli forces responded with riot dispersal means. We are aware of reports that a Palestinian was killed and a number of Palestinians were injured.'

### **Sunday 15th August**

Israel's High Court of Justice rejects a petition filed by Palestinian families proving their ownership of the land where Jewish settlers set up the illegal Avyatar outpost. Twelve Palestinians from the village of Beita filed the petition to the Israeli court claiming rights to the land on which the illegal outpost was built.

According to the Times of Israel, the three-judge panel found that the petitioners' claim was 'speculative', claiming that there was 'no basis' for the petitioners' argument and that the outcome of the ongoing land survey would provide a final conclusion. The paper also reported the judges as saying that as the land survey is ongoing, it is impossible to determine what areas of the land, if any, are privately owned by Palestinians. Meanwhile, the court noted that if any of the homes in the illegal outpost were found to have been built on privately owned land, they would be evacuated.

### **Friday 20th August**

At least thirteen Palestinians are injured by Israeli gunfire as the Israeli occupation army cracks down on hundreds of protesters. The Palestinian Red Crescent (PRC) says that of the thirteen injuries, one Palestinian sustained injury by live bullets, while the remaining 12 were injured by rubber-coated rounds.





### **Friday 3rd September**

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent (PRC), at least 70 Palestinians are injured by the Israeli occupation army. Israeli soldiers fired live gunfire, rubber-coated rounds, and stun grenades at the protesters. Some of the protesters also sustained injuries after falling on the ground while being chased by Israeli soldiers. Meanwhile, some 51 protesters sustained suffocation from teargas inhalation. An ambulance was also hit with Israeli teargas canisters, which smashed the front windshields.

### **Friday 24th September**

Muhammad Ali Khabisa (28) becomes the 7th victim to be shot dead, reportedly while sitting under an olive tree. A sniper bullet smashed his skull. The Palestinian Ministry of Health said 28-year-old Mohammad Ali Khabisa sustained a critical gunfire injury in the head after he was shot by Israeli soldiers during the weekly anti-settlement protests in the village.

At least eight Palestinian protesters were also injured during the clashes with the Israeli occupation forces who fired live gunfire, rubber-coated rounds and stun grenades. Another 18 cases of suffocation from teargas were reported.

Meanwhile, four Palestinian protesters were injured by Israeli gunfire during the weekly protest in the village of Kafr Qaddum.

### **Friday 1st October**

19 Palestinians are injured by Israeli rubber bullets, and 17 others suffer tear gas inhalation on Jabal Abu Sbeih.

According to the bi-weekly Protection of Civilians report published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the occupied Palestinian territory, between September 7th and 20th, across the West Bank, occupation forces injured 568 Palestinians, including 73 children.

320 were injured during ongoing protests against settlement activities in the Nablus governorate.

According to the OCHA report, six of the wounded Palestinians were shot with live ammunition, 138 were hit by rubber bullets, three were physically assaulted or hit by a tear gas canister, and the rest were treated for tear gas inhalation. In addition to the 568 people who were injured directly by Israeli forces, 46 Palestinians were injured either while running away from Israeli forces or in circumstances that could not be verified.

