



# FACT-SHEET #1

FACT-SHEET ON SETTLER VIOLENCE AND ACCESS RESTRICTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

## TRAPPED BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS

### IN PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AROUND YITZHAR AND BRACHA SETTLEMENTS

October 2014



Le village d'Asira al Qibliya avec en arrière-plan, la colonie d'Yitzhar

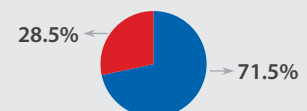
#### HIGHLIGHTS – MDM AND PU-AMI DATA

**USD 1 500 000**

Estimated economic loss due to settlers' damages to over **2,000** Palestinian-owned trees in the six villages surrounding Yitzhar settlement.

In conflict zones mental health disorders can go up to **40%** of the population. In Palestine almost **55%** of boys under **15** suffer from emotional and behavioural disorders.

*World Bank - Social development note - conflict prevention and reconstruction and International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 2009, 3:21*



**28.5%** of lands in villages surrounding Yitzhar have access restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities.

# SETTLERS' ATTACKS AND ACCESS RESTRICTIONS IN PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AROUND YITZHAR AND BRACHA SETTLEMENTS

Together with the existence of settlements and their steady expansion goes the growing concern around the increase of settler violence in the West Bank, lack of accountability of violent settlers and restrictions of access of Palestinians to their lands. Indeed, *"one of the main measures adopted by the Israeli army to address settler violence has been the closure of private Palestinian land"*<sup>1</sup>. This results in considerable economic losses for the Palestinian population. The UN Secretary-General stressed the adverse effect of this violence on Palestinians' access to livelihoods<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, this increasing violence has an impact on the physical and mental health of Palestinians.

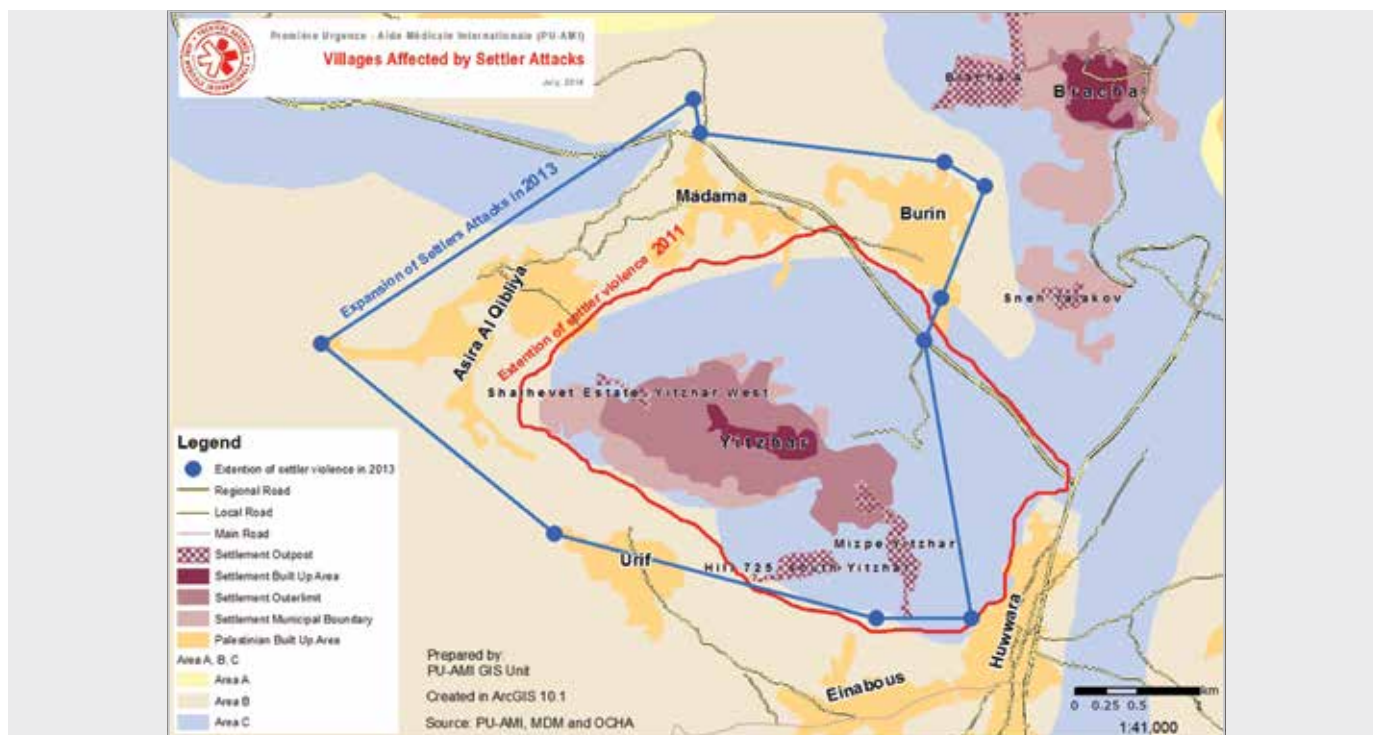


*"Settler violence affects the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of the Palestinian population"*

United Nations Human Rights Council International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

## Settlers' attacks resulting in Palestinian casualties or property damage

In the last 3 years, OCHA reported Nablus Governorate (North of the West Bank) as the one that most suffers from settler violence<sup>3</sup>. The highest number of settler attacks comes from Yitzhar settlement, according to OCHA, and the villages surrounding it (Burin, Urif, Madama, Asira Al Qiblyia, Einabus and Madama) are thus strongly exposed<sup>4</sup>.



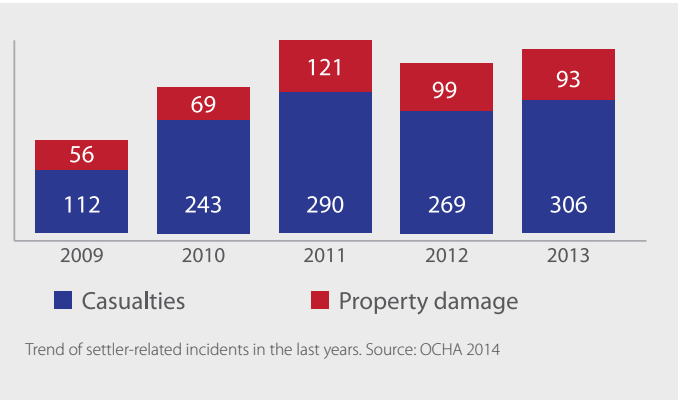
## KEY TERMS

- **Settlement:** Israeli civilian inhabited area in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Settlements are illegal under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as they represent forced transfer of occupying power's population into the occupied territory (Art. 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention). There are nowadays around 150 settlements in the West Bank (OCHA 2012).
- **Outpost:** settlements built without official authorization by Israeli authorities and illegal under Israeli law too. Around 100 outposts are spread around the West Bank. (OCHA 2012).
- **Settlers:** Israeli civilians living in the oPt settlements and outpost. There are today around 520,000 settlers in the West Bank including East Jerusalem (OCHA 2012). Israeli government encourages civilians to live in settlements by, amongst others, providing significant benefits and incentives, as reported by the Israeli NGO B'Tselem<sup>5</sup>. There is a number of settlers holding a second citizenship besides the Israeli one.
- **Settler-related incident:** settler-related incidents include attacks by settlers on the Palestinian population as well as Israeli Forces (IF) attacks carried out during settlers' attacks.

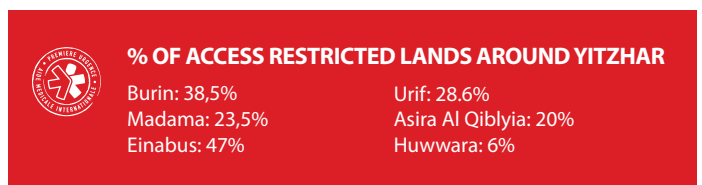
1. [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_02\\_19\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_02_19_english.pdf)  
 2. <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/A38CC9891ED4C23785257AAF005052A3>  
 3. [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_02\\_19\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_02_19_english.pdf)

4. [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_yitzhar\\_map\\_february\\_2012\\_map\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_yitzhar_map_february_2012_map_english.pdf)  
 5. [http://www.btselem.org/download/201007\\_by\\_hook\\_and\\_by\\_crook\\_eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf)

Consequently, Première Urgence - Aide Médicale Internationale (PU-AMI) and Médecins du Monde (Mdm) activities in the West Bank concentrate in this Governorate. Besides the provision of livelihood and psychosocial support respectively, both organizations jointly report settler violence, among other type of incidents. In this way, a coordinated response with other humanitarian, human rights, and legal aid actors may be deployed.



*"The symptoms that we most often identify are eating and sleeping disorders, anxiety, aggressiveness and depression as well as behavioral problems, leading to major psychosocial consequences like social withdrawal, domestic problems and academic deterioration for children who lack concentration due the atmosphere of fear in which they evolve". (Mdm Social Worker)*



### KEY FIGURES ON SETTLER VIOLENCE AND ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Since the beginning of 2014, PU-AMI and Mdm recorded in Nablus Governorate:

 **540 DAMAGED TREES**       **14 DAMAGED STRUCTURES** (houses, schools, wells, etc.)

## BURIN VILLAGE – WHEN FAMILIES ARE TRAPPED

### A case study

Burin is a Palestinian village trapped between Yitzhar and Bracha settlements and their outposts. As a result, and according to PU-AMI and Mdm data, Burin is the village most often attacked by settlers in the area and is seeing its land progressively reduced. Attacks originate from both settlements.

One of the closest buildings to Arousa outpost (an extension to Bracha) is G.E.'s house, which is regularly attacked by settlers. Here, G.E. is often alone with her three children since her husband works out of the village.



On the 25th of November 2013, around 11.00pm, the owner of the house heard sounds nearby. He saw a group of Israeli settlers stoning his house and setting it on fire. He tried to calm his family and when the settlers left, half an hour later, G.E.'s family tried to extinguish the fire, which was very close to the cooking gas cylinder. The children were so afraid that they couldn't sleep, and neither could the neighbours. (Mdm Social Worker)

The household was supported by PU-AMI through the construction of a protective wall and fences around the house to prevent settlers from approaching it. Mdm provided all members of the family with emergency psychosocial support.

"Villagers here show an increased level of anxiety and fear. Men very often feel frustrated not to be able to protect their families, which also manifest in domestic problems and social withdrawal. In the case of women they are often prevented from working out of the house or from moving freely as a protection measure." (Mdm psychologist)

"Not only do we get attacked by settlers, we also lost 60,000 m<sup>2</sup> of agricultural land to Arousa, which is now planted with olive trees and

grapes by the Israeli settlers. We are left with 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land to which is under access restricted since 2009. Since then, olive oil production has been reduced by 50% and not only have enough oil for our domestic consumption." (G.E.)

Since Arousa has further expanded toward this land after this testimony was collected, there are serious concerns that access might be completely prohibited here as well.

# CONCLUSION

All over the West Bank, 399 settlers' attacks resulting in Palestinian casualties or property damage were recorded in 2013 only. Burin is but an example of this widespread settler violence and settlements negative impact on the daily life of Palestinians. In the West Bank, this represents more than one attack per day and shows the systematic nature of this phenomenon, which has also seen a steady increase over the last years.

The mental and physical health of Palestinians are increasingly deeply affected by settlements and the humanitarian consequences they bring along.

Israel, as the occupying power, has obligations under International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law to protect the Palestinian population and their access to basic needs. These obligations and the impact that the lack of its fulfillment has on the population have been repeatedly recalled by the United Nations and other instances, including the European Union.

MdM and PU-AMI, which bear witness to how Israeli settlers' attacks and restrictions of access to lands affect Palestinians and their enjoyment of the rights they are entitled to, would like to remind those provisions and urge duty bearers to abide by them.

## For additional information, please contact:



**Alejandra Garcia-Paton**

Advocacy Officer – oPt  
Médecins du Monde - France  
[www.medecinsdumonde.com](http://www.medecinsdumonde.com)  
[www.mdm-me.org](http://www.mdm-me.org)  
[alejandra.garcia-paton@medecinsdumonde.net](mailto:alejandra.garcia-paton@medecinsdumonde.net)  
Tel: oPt +972 (0) 595 94 06 50 / Israel: + 972 (0) 549 08 73 63



**Camilla Corradin**

Advocacy Officer – oPt  
Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale  
[www.pu-ami.org](http://www.pu-ami.org)  
[opt.advocacyoff@pu-ami.org](mailto:opt.advocacyoff@pu-ami.org)  
Tel: +972 (0)59 572 76 23

[www.medecinsdumonde.org](http://www.medecinsdumonde.org)  
[www.pu-ami.org](http://www.pu-ami.org)

*Trees cut down by settlers in Burin and Yitzhar settlement in the background, PU-AMI, September 2013*