



OLIVE HARVEST FACTSHEET

OCTOBER 2012

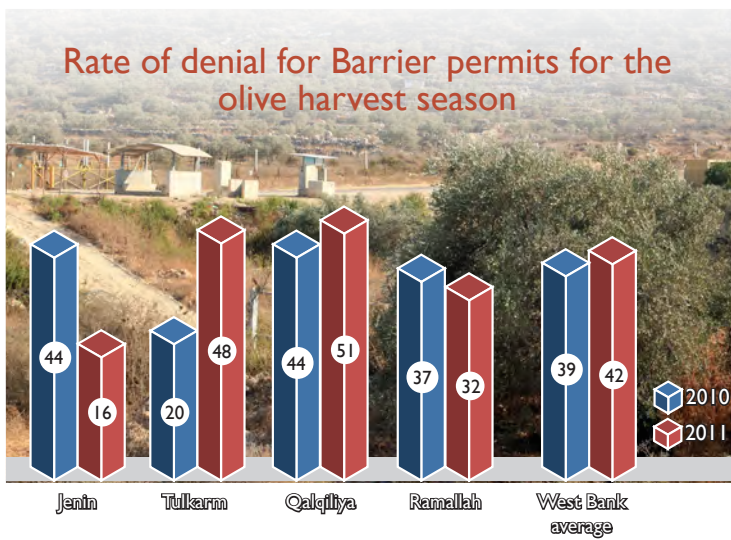
KEY FACTS

- Nearly half (48%) of the agricultural land in the oPt is planted with 8 million olive trees; the vast majority are in the West Bank.
- The olive oil industry makes up 14% of the agricultural income for the oPt and supports the livelihoods of approximately 80,000 families.
- The number of Barrier gates increased to 73 in 2012 but the majority (52) are closed year round, except for the olive harvest period and only then for limited hours.
- In 2011, 42% of applications for permits to access olive groves behind the Barrier submitted prior to the harvest season were rejected, compared to 39% in 2010.
- [In the West Bank, over 7,500 olive trees belonging to Palestinians were damaged or destroyed by Israeli settlers between January and mid October 2012](#), some 2,000 fewer than during the equivalent period in 2011.
- Only one of the 162 complaints regarding settler attacks against Palestinian trees monitored by the Israeli NGO Yesh Din since 2005 has so far led to the indictment of a suspect.
- In the Gaza Strip, 7,300 dunums of land along the perimeter fence with Israel that were previously planted with olive trees have been leveled during Israeli military operations.

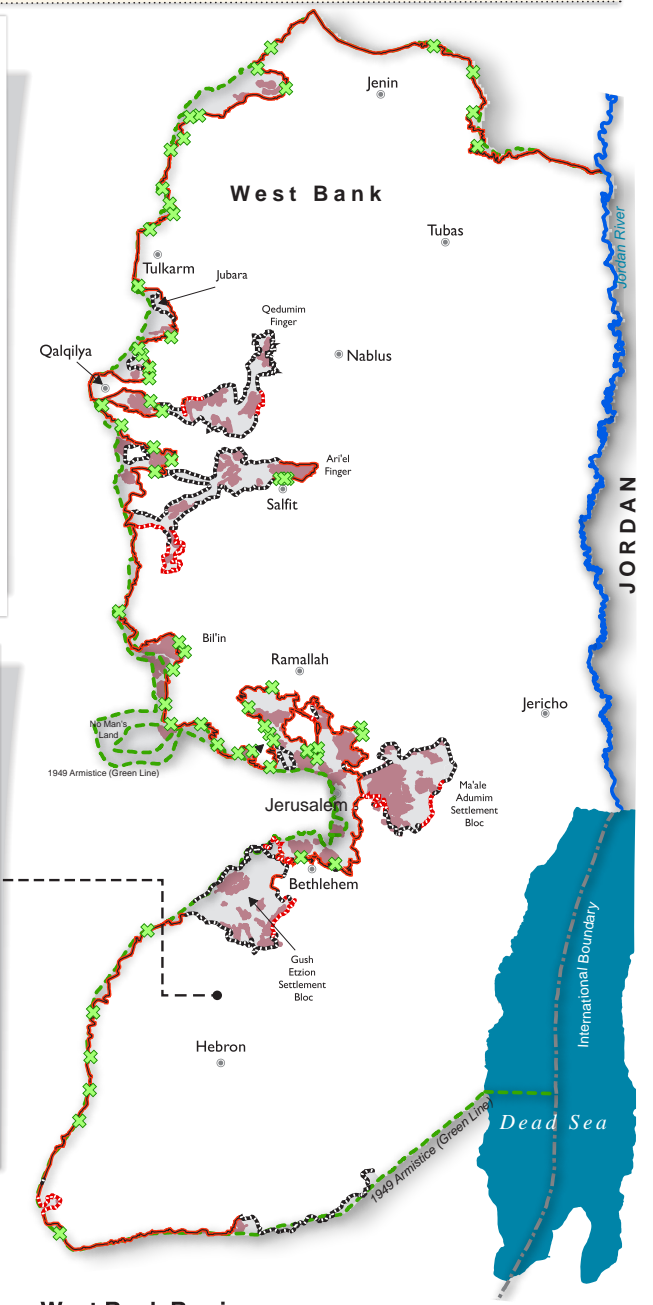
1. The annual olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event for Palestinians. Communities with olive groves located between the Barrier and the Green Line and in the vicinity of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and along the perimeter fence surrounding the Gaza Strip face serious challenges in maintaining and harvesting their olive crops which, in turn, undermine their livelihoods and increase their vulnerabilities.
2. Thousands of Palestinians are denied permits to access their olive groves located behind the Barrier for 'security reasons' or because they are unable to meet Israel's criteria to prove a 'connection to the land'. However, more are granted permits during the harvest period than during the rest of the year.
3. Those with permits must use 'agricultural gates' built along the Barrier, most of which are only open for a very limited time during the annual harvest. This restrictive regime prevents farmers from carrying out essential year-round maintenance such as ploughing, pruning, and fertilizing, which in turn undermines the quality and quantity of the yield.
4. Settler violence poses a serious challenge for many Palestinian farmers. Palestinian-owned olive trees have been damaged, uprooted, poisoned, burnt down or harvested by settlers. The Israeli authorities have sought to implement a system to limit Palestinian farmers' access to olive trees near 55 settlements to a few days a year; Israeli soldiers are deployed to support their access during these periods. This has resulted in fewer attacks on farmers but is ineffective in preventing the vandalizing of olive trees throughout the rest of the year.
5. This system penalizes farmers by limiting their access, rather than enforcing the rule of law on violent settlers. The vast majority of complaints regarding settler violence against Palestinian farmers and their property that are filed with the Israeli Police are closed without indictment.
6. In the Gaza Strip, the majority of the olive trees located in areas within 1.5 km from the perimeter fence were destroyed in recent years by the Israeli military. Farmers are effectively unable to replant due to the high risk that their new trees will be leveled by the Israeli military during regular incursions and because access is restricted and dangerous.
7. Israel, as the occupying power, must fulfill its obligations under international law to protect Palestinian civilians and property. It must ensure Palestinian farmers' safe and unimpeded access to their agricultural land throughout the year and ensure those responsible for attacks.

Olive trees damaged by Israeli settlers in Beitilla village near Nablus settlements, Ramallah, October 2012, photo: OCHA





Barrier gates control access to Jayous village olive groves isolated by the Barrier, Jayous October 2012; photos: Vardit Goldner



Olive groves behind the electronic fences of settlements

Similarly to more than 50 other settlements, the outer limits of Karmeil Zur settlement encompass over 100 dunums of private land cultivated by Palestinians. Access to this area is restricted by a 'prior coordination' regime which undermines agricultural livelihoods.



The Barrier near Karmeil Zur settlement, October 2012, photo by OCHA



Access restricted areas

The large majority of the olive trees that existed in areas within 1.5 km from the perimeter fence were destroyed in recent years by the Israeli military. Farmers refrain from replanting these areas due to the weekly leveling incursions and the risk of receiving 'warning shots' when approaching the area.



Formerly lavish olive groves were leveled by the IDF in the access restricted areas along the border fence, Gaza 2012, photo by OCHA.