



# OLIVE HARVEST FACTSHEET

## OCTOBER 2011

### FAST FACTS

- About 45% of the agricultural land in the oPt is planted with 12 million olive trees, the vast majority in the West Bank.
- The olive oil industry provides about one quarter of the gross agricultural income in the oPt and supports the livelihoods of approximately 100,000 families.
- 44 out of 66 Barrier gates are only open during the harvest season, impeding the regular maintenance of the groves and undermining their productivity.
- Some 40% of applications for 'visitor permits' to access olive groves behind the Barrier, submitted by Palestinians on the eve of the 2010 harvest season, were rejected.
- In the vicinity of 55 Israeli settlements, Palestinian access to olive groves is limited to certain times during the harvest season, when Israeli forces are deployed on the ground.
- Between January and September 2011, more than 7,500 olive trees belonging to Palestinians were uprooted, set on fire or otherwise vandalized by Israeli settlers.
- Of 97 complaints about settler attacks against Palestinian trees, followed up by the Israeli NGO Yesh Din, none (zero) has so far led to the indictment of a suspect.
- In the Gaza Strip, over 7,300 dunums of land along the perimeter fence with Israel, that were previously cultivated with olive trees have been leveled during Israeli incursions in recent years.

**1. A range of access and protection challenges has hindered the ability of Palestinians to earn their living from olive trees**, particularly during the olive harvest season. The most problematic areas are olive groves located between the Barrier and the Green Line, in the vicinity of Israeli settlements, and along the perimeter fence surrounding the Gaza Strip.

**2. Thousands of farmers are denied access to their olive groves located between the Barrier and the Green Line due to 'security reasons' or inability to meet Israel's criteria to prove a 'connection to the land'.** This is in spite of the fact that the Israeli authorities approve a larger number of permit applications than during the olive harvest than the rest of the year. Many Palestinians are discouraged from applying for permits as they have been refused in the past, and others refuse to apply as a matter of principle.

**3. The majority of the 'agricultural gates' along the Barrier (44 out of 66) are only open for a limited number of hours during harvest days.** This restrictive opening prevents many farmers from carrying out essential all year round activities such as ploughing, pruning,

and fertilizing, thus undermining the quality and quantity of the yield.

**4. In 'friction areas' around settlements, Palestinian access during the harvest is restricted to limited periods designated by the Israeli army.** While this measure is intended to prevent settler attacks, it puts the onus of the limitations on the farmers, rather than on violent settlers, and is ineffective in preventing attacks against trees when soldiers are not present.

**5. A pervasive and long standing lack of accountability is a key factor encouraging settler violence**, including in the context of the olive harvest. The large majority of complaints filed with the Israeli Police following settler attacks are regularly closed without indictment.

**6. In the Gaza Strip, military activities in areas up to 1.5 km from the perimeter fence with Israel have largely prevented thousands of families from accessing their olive trees.** The majority of the trees in these areas were uprooted in recent years during land leveling operations. Farmers accessing the olive trees that remain in the area are often exposed to 'warning shots' by Israeli forces deployed along the fence.

7. Israel, as the occupying power, must fulfill its obligations under international law to protect Palestinian civilians and property, effectively prevent and ensure accountability for all acts of violence,

whether committed by Israeli forces or settlers. Israeli authorities must also ensure that the civilian population of the oPt is able to enjoy its basic rights, including the right to freedom of movement, and the right to work and gain a living.

