Case Study: Masked settlers assault elderly Palestinian shepherd

On 22 August 2012, Palestinian shepherd Haj Ismail Ibrahim al-Adara was herding his sheep just a few hundred metres from his home in the West Bank village of Khirbet Bir al-Idd (south of Hebron) when a car pulled up with four settlers inside. Two of the men were masked, but he recognised the other two. 68-year-old Ismail says he wasn’t expecting the men to attack him, so he went to shake their hands. However, the two masked men got out of the car and started attacking him. One settler hit him six times on the head and shoulders from behind, while the other threatened him with a knife. The shepherd managed to knock the knife out of the man’s hand, injuring himself in the process. When the pair saw that Ismail was bleeding badly from the head, they fled on foot and left him lying on the ground. Ismail’s 11-year-old son found him and called for help. The shepherd was taken to Alia hospital in Hebron, where he needed 14 stitches in his head and four in his hand. When an EAPPI volunteer visited him in hospital, the elderly Palestinian was in good spirits, saying boldly “This is nothing. I’m just here to renew my blood. I’m just resting.” He said he would go back to his village - and his large family - as soon as he was discharged from hospital.

In 2012, one Palestinian was killed and about 1,300 injured by Israeli settlers or security forces in incidents directly or indirectly related to settlements

Source: UN OCHA

Israeli Settlers vs. Palestinians: an even-sided conflict?

Figures from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) record 239 settler violence incidents against Palestinians and their property from January to July 2013, compared to 32 such attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians. This is a ratio of 7.5:1.

UN statistics also show that in 2012 one Palestinian was killed and 1,300 injured by Israeli settlers and security forces in incidents directly or indirectly related to settlements (including at demonstrations.) While violence on both sides must be condemned, there is a fundamental difference in the level of accountability - depending on whether an attack is committed by an Israeli or a Palestinian. The Israeli NGO Yesh Din has found that only about 10% of investigations conducted by Israeli police into incidents of settler violence have resulted in indictments.

In another stark contrast, Israeli military law is applied to Palestinians in the West Bank, while Israeli settlers live under Israeli civilian law. This is despite the fact that settlements are in fact illegal under international law, as they violate the ban in the Fourth Geneva Convention on transferring the civilian population into occupied territory.

No. of settler violence incidents against Palestinians January to July 2013: 239
No. of Palestinian incidents against Israelis in January to July 2013: 32

Source: UN OCHA
On the evening of 2nd January 2013, villagers in Jalud, near Nablus, made desperate phone calls pleading for help. Dozens of settlers, they said, had descended on the village and were throwing stones at their homes.

The attack reportedly lasted for an hour, during which families huddled inside their homes as stones smashed through their windows. A four-year-old boy, Fareh Nassim Fareh was inside his house when a stone hurtled inside, striking his head. As soon as it was safe to leave the village, the child’s family rushed him to a clinic in Qaryut, where he needed to have six stitches.

In total, the settler attack left three people wounded, and the windows of seven houses and a car badly damaged.

Residents told EAPPI volunteers of their terror when the assault was taking place.

“Every day I feel it is getting worse to live here,” said Jalud resident Mohammed Kamal Abed.

He said about 60 settlers aged in their twenties and thirties had come to the Palestinian village. Mohammed added that although Jalud had been attacked many times before, it was the first time it had been targeted by such a large group.

Residents told EAPPI volunteers of their terror when the assault was taking place.

“Every day I feel it is getting worse to live here,” said Jalud resident Mohammed Kamal Abed.

“He said about 60 settlers aged in their twenties and thirties had come to the Palestinian village. Mohammed added that although Jalud had been attacked many times before, it was the first time it had been targeted by such a large group.

While village leaders filed a complaint with Israeli authorities, they are not hopeful that the settlers will be arrested - and local families are fearful that the settlers will soon be back.

ABOUT EAPPI

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is an international observer programme that supports Israelis and Palestinians working for peace. Since the programme began in 2002, it has brought more than 1,000 volunteers from more than 25 countries to Jerusalem and the West Bank.

EAPPI volunteers walk Palestinian children to school in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, accompanying them on the often perilous journey past settlements. They also monitor checkpoints, and report on human rights violations such as house demolitions or settler violence. In addition, they support Israeli and Palestinian groups in advocating for a just peace based on international law.