

# West Bank - Our film is going to the Oscars. But here in Masafer Yatta, we're still being erased

Tuesday 11 February 2025, by [ADRA Basel](#) (Date first published: 10 February 2025).

**As the world watches 'No Other Land,' Israeli settlers are raiding and burning our villages while soldiers arrest us, abuse us, and demolish our homes.**

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Throughout the making of "No Other Land" — our documentary about the struggle and resilience of the Palestinian residents of [Masafer Yatta](#) in the face of Israel's efforts to expel us — one question persisted: Will anyone even watch this? Will anyone care?

From the moment the film premiered in Berlin last year, [the answer became clear](#). Thousands of messages of solidarity, inquiries about how to watch it, and invitations from film festivals around the world proved that there was an overwhelming appetite to hear our story. And last month, it was even nominated for an Oscar.

This is a tremendous achievement — not just for us as filmmakers, but for the activists, friends, and partners in the struggle who spend long hours in the field, [facing violence and arrest](#) in the fight against [oppression and colonization](#). It is also a testament to the lawyers who [persist in Israeli courts](#), determined to secure any means of helping Palestinians remain on their land within a system [designed to legitimize the occupation](#).

But first and foremost, it is a victory for [the people of Masafer Yatta](#), a collection of small villages at the southern tip of the occupied West Bank, whose resilience reflects their unwavering commitment to their land. While the occupation seeks to erase their existence, their steadfastness continues to inspire us to resist, document, and fight for justice.



*Israeli army forces demolish Palestinian homes and property in She'ab al-Bottom in Masafer Yatta, in the West Bank, July 8, 2024. (Basel Adra/Activestills)*

Despite the exciting success of the film in festivals and among journalists and audiences around the world, however, the situation here on the ground is [deteriorating rapidly](#) and the future looks bleak. Over the past 16 months, Israeli settlers and the military have taken advantage of the atmosphere of the war to [reshape reality](#) in Masafer Yatta in favor of [settlers and their outposts](#), intensifying their efforts to displace us from our land. Even [as I write this](#), the Israeli army is conducting a major demolition operation in the community of Khalet A-Daba, razing homes, toilets, solar panels, and trees.

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While this article cannot possibly cover every recent attack or act of dispossession against Palestinian residents, I wanted to highlight some of the most notable incidents from the last few weeks to show that while we are gaining international recognition, our material reality remains a daily struggle against erasure.

### **'Nothing they do will make me leave this place'**

Khaled Musa Abdel Rahman Al-Najjar, 72, lives with his 10 family members in the community of Qawawis. Most nights, he stays awake for fear of settler attacks. "The settlement of Mitzpe Ya'ir is a kilometer southeast of our community, and an illegal outpost was established 400 meters away after the war began in October 2023," he told me. "The settlers also built a wooden structure just 200 meters from my home, giving them a clear view of it."

Al-Najjar was at home on Jan. 3, when he heard a dog barking loudly outside just after 3 a.m. "I grabbed my flashlight and went to check on my donkey, which I had tied [to the house] fearing settlers might steal it. But I saw nothing, so I returned inside."

Ten minutes later, he heard the barking again. "I went back outside, and suddenly I saw a settler approaching me," Al-Najjar recounted. "He said, 'Come here,' and tried to grab my flashlight, but I pushed him away. Then, three other masked settlers started running toward me, wielding batons.

"I started screaming for help, but no one heard me," he continued. "The [first settler I saw] struck my arm, knocking the flashlight out of my hand. The others joined him, throwing me to the ground and beating me all over my body until I began to lose consciousness. It felt like I had fallen into a hornets nest."

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After several minutes of assault, the settlers left, leaving Al-Najjar bleeding on the ground. "I gathered my strength and walked back into the house, blood streaming from my head and forehead. I couldn't speak." Shortly after, international activists arrived and shepherded Al-Najjar to an ambulance that evacuated him to a hospital in the nearest city of Yatta.

After receiving initial treatment, Al-Najjar was taken to a bigger hospital in Hebron where a scan revealed internal bleeding in his brain. "I was admitted to intensive care in critical condition," he said. "Two days later, I was discharged, but I am still recovering from this brutal assault."

This was not the first time [Al-Najjar has been attacked](#) by settlers. In 2001, a settler shot him in the stomach using a gun he borrowed from an Israeli soldier. The scars remain on his body to this day.

Yet despite his severe injuries and the repeated attacks, Al-Najjar remains defiant. "Nothing they do will make me leave this place," he told me when I gave him a ride back from Yatta the day after he was discharged from hospital. "All I want is to see my grandchildren and spend time with them at

home.”

With all of the despair we feel and the lack of hope, it is people like Khaled Al-Najjar, who refuse to leave their land despite being subjected to brutal assaults, that inspire us to keep resisting, no matter how powerless we feel.

## **Settler terror in service of land theft**

Since October 7, settlers have established at least eight new outposts in different areas of Masafer Yatta. In the [village of Tuba](#), settlers from the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on set up a new non-residential outpost — consisting of swings and an Israeli flag — just 100 meters from the homes of the Awad family, where they frequently gather before provoking and attacking the Palestinian residents.

On the afternoon of Jan. 25, 26-year-old [Ali Awad](#) was sitting in his parked jeep next to his family's home [when he saw](#) six masked settlers running toward him. One carried a rifle, another a bottle of gasoline. “I wanted to start up the car and flee, but then I saw my young cousin and my elderly grandparents,” he recounted. “I got out of the car and went toward the children to move them away from the house. Then I heard glass shattering.”

When he looked back at his car, Awad saw smoke billowing from it. The settlers had set it on fire. “They knew I used it to [drive children to school](#) and transport residents to the city to get necessities since the army [blocked](#) the normal road [for non-offroad vehicles],” he explained.

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After torching Awad's jeep, the settlers shifted their attention to the barn adjacent to his house, which contained 10 tons of animal feed, and set it on fire as well. “Luckily, the fire didn't spread,” Awad told me.

But the situation soon escalated even further. One of the settlers forcibly entered the home of Awad's uncle, Mahmoud, while his young cousins — Jouri, 6, and Jude, 9 — were inside. “The attack lasted around 10 minutes,” Awad recounted. “The settler shattered glass in the kitchen, destroyed two cabinets, and mixed up the stores of flour and rice in the pantry. He also overturned a 100-kilogram container of yogurt onto the floor and smashed a sink.”

Later, the family discovered that the children may also have been attacked. “Jouri had a visible mark from a blow on her back, while Jude was struck on his right arm,” he said. Awad has since filed a complaint with the Israeli police about the incident, but so far received no update.

Four days later, while the family was still recovering from the previous attack, a settler shepherd, accompanied by Israeli police and soldiers, arrived in the village in the morning with his herd and entered Palestinian-owned agricultural land.

“I woke up and there was a whole army in front of my house,” Awad recounted. The settler, it turned out, claimed that some of Tuba's residents had attacked him and stolen his phone. But although Awad himself was not even among those the settler had accused, he was arrested by the army, along with four other residents.

“The soldiers humiliated me during the arrest,” Awad told me. “I was thrown on my face on the floor of the military jeep. The soldiers sat around me, and one of them kept his foot on my back the whole way. My right hand was bleeding from how tight they put on the handcuffs.”

Awad was kept shackled for hours before being transferred to the police station in the settlement of Kiryat Arba for interrogation. He and two other detainees were released later that day, while two more, including Awad's uncle, Khalil, were kept for several more days before being released.



*Israeli army forces demolish a house and a water well in Al-Samu in the village of Susya, south of Hebron in the West Bank, December 11, 2024. (Basel Adra/Activestills)*

### **As settlers invade, soldiers stand by**

Under the shadow of Israel's war on Gaza, the army has begun enforcing new restrictions on Palestinian landowners in the West Bank, requiring them to receive permission from the [Civil Administration](#) ahead of any outing to their own agricultural lands. In many cases, settlers enter these lands illegally as their Palestinian owners remain barred from them.

In the village of Qawawis, the army granted landowners, including the Hoshiyah family, permission to access their fields on Jan. 14, but then canceled the permit without explanation only 10 minutes before they were set to begin work. A week later, on Jan. 21, the army finally allowed the family to access their own property.

In the early morning hours of that day, the family took two tractors and went to plow their land but quickly encountered settlers. "I was near my house at around 8:30 a.m. when I saw a group of about 30 settlers from Susya, Mitzpe Yair, and nearby outposts appear and run toward Hoshiyah's land to stop the tractors from plowing," Taleb Al-Nu'amin, a local resident, recounted.

"The tractor driver quickly retreated back toward Qawawis to avoid the settlers, some of whom were masked and armed with batons and other weapons," he continued. "One of the settlers punctured the tires of one of the tractors with a knife, forcing the driver to flee toward Yatta, while the other managed to hide his tractor among the community's homes."

Army forces and Civil Administration personnel who were present at the site "did nothing to intervene," Al-Nu'amin emphasized. "While we called the Israeli police and informed them of the incident, the settlers brought a herd of sheep and led them into our wheat fields. Myself, my children and other villagers shouted at the settlers to take their sheep away, but Border Police officers blocked us from approaching them."

#### *Video*

After some time, police officers removed the settlers from the area and left. But several minutes later, about 15 settlers returned, one carrying a rifle and others wielding batons. "They started throwing stones at us, and some Palestinians responded by throwing stones back to protect their homes," Al-Nu'amin said. "I repeatedly called the police, who [eventually] claimed they were on their way but never arrived."

The settlers soon reached the Palestinian landowners and their families. "My nephew, 21-year-old Nour Al-Din Abdul Aziz Abu Aram, was struck in the forehead by a stone, causing severe bleeding,"

Al-Nu'amin said. "Jibreel Abu Aram, a 65-year-old, was hit in the right leg. Another resident, Jaafar Nu'aman, 29, was struck on the back of his head, and suffocated from pepper spray used by one of the settlers."

Jibreel, whose house was demolished last year, was later arrested at his home and is still in detention. Nour Al-Din's injuries — a skull fracture and brain hemorrhage — required him to undergo surgery the following day. He is currently recovering at home.

## **State-sanctioned chaos**

On Feb. 2 at around 8 p.m., while I was at home, I received a call that settlers were attacking the village of [Susya](#). I quickly gathered a few friends and we drove there as fast as we could.

When we arrived, we learned that dozens of settlers had descended on my friend Nasser Nawajah's house, pelting it with stones while his terrified family was inside. They smashed his vehicle, slashed its tires with knives, and then moved on to his brother's house, where they punctured the water tank.

After those settlers left, about 15 more emerged from cars arriving from the nearby Jewish settlement, [Susya](#). As they charged toward us, Nawajah called the police — who had already been notified at least 15 minutes earlier but had yet to arrive. Some settlers hurled stones in our direction, while others targeted a nearby house, smashing a parked car, destroying the security camera, and pelting the building with rocks. Inside, the terrified family locked their door and screamed for help.

*View this post on Instagram*

Amid the chaos, my friends and I tried to document as much as we could. Finally, after 30 minutes, a police car arrived, and the settlers retreated. We shined our flashlights and shouted at the officer to detain them, but he did nothing until they had already made their way back to the outpost. By the time he went looking for them, they had already fled.

One of the settlers' vehicles remained parked on the road, abandoned. We asked the officer to check or confiscate it, but he refused.

Meanwhile, in the nearby village of Umm Al-Khair, settlers have been using bulldozers to excavate right next to Palestinian homes and the local community center, which contains a children's park, since Feb. 2. According to the head of the Har Hevron Regional Council, they intend to create a settler-only park inside the Palestinian village.

They are doing so under the pretext that it is "state land," despite the fact that the land has been owned by the Palestinian residents for decades. This project is a clear example of how the Israeli state uses settlement expansion to strangle Palestinian communities here.

For many years, Israel has attempted to conceal the brutal face of its occupation with a "democratic" mask. Using various dubious legal concepts like "illegal construction" (on illegally occupied land), it has tried to demolish and erase entire Palestinian communities from lands on which they've existed for decades, if not centuries.

The Israeli police did not respond to +972's inquiries regarding any of the incidents detailed in this article. The army's response will be added once received.

Many who watch "No Other Land" around the world are not as distant as they may think from this

reality. In fact, they bear some responsibility for it. Without the support of their governments — the diplomatic cover and unconditional financial and military aid — Israel would not have been able to consistently flout international law for decades.

With this in mind, No Other Land wasn't just a creative endeavor for me; it was an act of resistance. By bringing the story of Masafer Yatta — and the issue of ethnic cleansing and home demolitions in the West Bank — to audiences worldwide, we did not seek to evoke sorrow or pity, but to inspire action, and urge people to join our struggle against the occupation.

## Basel Adra

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### P.S.

- +972 Magazine. February 10, 2025:  
<https://www.972mag.com/no-other-land-oscars-masafer-yatta-erasure/>
- Basel Adraa is an activist, journalist, and photographer from the village of a-Tuwani in the South Hebron Hills.
- Basel Adra's articles in +972 Magazine:  
<https://www.972mag.com/writer/basil-al-adraa/>
- Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war - the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas' murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel's retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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