

Analysis | Israeli Settlers Aren't Pausing the Expulsion and Dispossession in the West Bank

Saturday 14 October 2023, by [HASS Amira](#) (Date first published: 12 October 2023).

While Israel and the world focus on Saturday's atrocities, the settlers and their supporters work to implement their dream of de facto annexation of the West Bank

Israeli security forces neglected the defense of communities near the Gaza Strip because they have been preoccupied with defending the settlers in the West Bank, their land seizures, and their rites of stone and altar worshiping.

This is one of the inescapable conclusions to be drawn from [the atrocities](#) committed on Saturday. It comes as no surprise, but this neglect is inherently connected to one of the chief goals of the judicial overhaul and its religious Zionist supporters – [accelerating the de facto annexation of most of the West Bank](#) and increasing the Jewish settler population. This goal is not just still on the table; it will now be even more straightforward to realize.

The Israeli and international media are ignoring the West Bank as the wrenching [testimony of the survivors](#) of Saturday's attacks gradually surfaces, and as the Israeli military conducts deadly revenge bombings of Gaza and cuts it off from water, power, and food supplies.

The lack of attention has allowed the settlers and their enforcement bodies, official (the military and the police) and semi-official (the settlements' security officers and right-wing volunteers acting as escorts), to escalate their attacks against Palestinian herders and farmers with a clear goal: to expel more communities from their land and homes.

Some proof of the volatility of the situation came on Wednesday, when three residents – two of them teenagers – of the village of Qusra, south east of Nablus, [were killed by live fire](#) and eight others wounded. Village residents say the shooters were masked settlers who entered the village on three ATVs. Later, when clashes erupted following the funerals, another teenager was killed in Qusra, whether by the army or others still unclear.

A Palestinian WhatsApp group documenting settler attacks in real time, especially in the area north of Ramallah, shared minute-by-minute reports on the events in Qusra. This information made its way to the news in Israel. But other incidents, which do not end up in casualties, did not. Also on Wednesday, for example, there were reports of settlers shooting at farmers working in their land in the village of Marda southwest of Nablus.

At 01:00 A.M. between Sunday and Monday, a message shared in the WhatsApp group warned, "A group of settlers is leveling a piece of land on the road connecting the villages of Qusra and Jalud," in an area where settlements like Shiloh and Eli and the Esh Kodesh and Adei Ad outposts are

located.

"We don't know what the nature of the work is because there's no electricity," the message read, "but they could be planning to destroy one of the agricultural buildings there." It was later reported that Israelis had destroyed an empty house that appeared to be owned by a Palestinian citizen of Israel.

At 3:00 A.M., it was reported settlers were trespassing into the village of Qaryout, west of Jalud, and confronting young Palestinians who approached them, before the military entered the area and shot at houses.

At 2:30 P.M., a report appeared about a Palestinian lawyer who had driven out of Salfit and was shot by a security guard or other Israeli civilian in the settlement of Ariel. The reason given was suspicion he intended to commit a car-ramming attack.

At 2:35 P.M., a warning came in about settlers shooting at Palestinian cars near Ni'lin. At 3:30 P.M. came a report about a settler attack on the town of Einabus, which is west of Hawara and bordered by the settlement of Yitzhar and its satellite outposts.

"The settlers are trying to enter one of the houses," said the voice in the attached video, and warned the residents to stay away from the window. Two residents were wounded by the gunfire, it was later reported.

At 6 P.M., a report said settlers and soldiers were demanding a family in the village of Turmus Ayya to leave their home near Shiloh. One of the family members told the WhatsApp group they refused to leave the house and that the army had already blocked the road to it the previous day in any case. The Wafa news agency also reported settlers throwing stones at Palestinian cars north of Jericho on Monday.

Palestinians' ability to assist communities under threat is more constrained than ever before. Since Saturday, the IDF has blocked many of the entrances and exits to Palestinian cities and villages by placing concrete blocks and mounds of dirt and locking iron gates already in place. A Palestinian journalist observed that Israeli troops were not manning positions near these new roadblocks.

Cities and villages are cut off from one another, with the lockdown especially tight around those close to Jerusalem. An official at one international aid agency told Haaretz that traveling between the north and south of the West Bank is impossible. The road between Bethlehem and Hebron is nearly inaccessible to Palestinians.

Palestinians who were in Israel on Saturday or Sunday were allowed to return home through the main checkpoints. Hundreds of Gazans, if not more, who had been working in Israel were forced to abandon their workplaces.

They could not return to bombarded Gaza, and while getting increasingly troubling news about the ordeals of their families, they were driven to the vicinity of Palestinian cities, including Jenin and Ramallah, where the authorities host them in public buildings, and residents in their homes.

The main roads are almost completely devoid of Palestinian-owned cars. Even those who can find a way out of the towns won't risk going on the road.

One of the settlers' most strident goals is to make Palestinian vehicles vanish from the West Bank's main roads. They sometimes implement this mission by blocking access roads into and out of towns.

At this tense moment, the lockdown on Palestinian towns and the absence of Palestinian traffic on main roads make it easier for the military to control the area. And as a byproduct, they actualize the religious Zionist leaders' open with and plan of making the Palestinians disappear.

Residents say each small gathering of a few young protesters near the checkpoints draws heavier fire than in the past. Armed settlers were seen engaged in shooting practice on Monday in the Tulkarm area, near a checkpoint whose soldiers are now absent.

A video settlers posted online describing the arms and ammunition allocated to them has only heightened Palestinian fears of being further abandoned to the barely concealed plans of the Israeli civilians who control their lives.

Amira Hass

P.S.

- Haaretz. Oct 12, 2023.
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-12/ty-article/.premium/israeli-settlers-arent-pausing-the-expulsion-and-dispossession-in-the-west-bank/>

- [Amira Hass](#) is a reporter and columnist for [Ha'aretz Daily](#), a newspaper based in Tel Aviv, Israel. She has been a journalist for two decades.

Hass, 53, has written critically about both Israeli and Palestinian authorities. She has not allowed her gender, ethnicity or nationality – all hindrances in the region she reports from – to obstruct her from pursuing the truth in her reporting.

In 1989, Hass quit her studies in history at Tel Aviv University and began working as a copy editor for Ha'aretz Daily. At the same time, she volunteered for Workers Hotline, a human rights group dedicated to reaching out to vulnerable workers, many of whom were Palestinian. She became acquainted with life in Gaza and grew frustrated about how poorly Israel's occupation of Gaza was represented in the Israeli press.

>By 1991, Hass was writing weekly features for Ha'aretz Daily, and in 1993, she became a full-time writer for the paper. She moved to Gaza, which at the time was under direct and full Israeli occupation.

Hass, now based in Ramallah, has lived in the Occupied Palestinian territories for nearly 16 years. She has been reporting on the life of Palestinians under the Israeli occupation and covering the major armed clashes and Israeli military attacks. Her goal has been to provide her readers with detailed information about Israeli policies, especially restrictions on the freedom of movement.

In the course of her work, Hass has been threatened, harassed and detained. Most recently, in May 2009, she was detained by Israeli police on her return from a four-month stay in Gaza "for violating a military order" (which forbids entry into Gaza) and "for staying illegally in an enemy state." She had also been detained in December 2008 by Israeli police on her return to Ramallah for violating the same military order.