

REPORT

Human Rights Violations and Popular Struggle in South Hebron Hills

January 2018



Operation Dove

Nonviolent Peace Corps of Associazione "Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII"

www.operationdove.org

INDEX

● ISRAELI ARMY AND POLICE

- SCHOOL PATROL
- MILITARY HARASSMENT AND AGGRESSIONS
- CLOSURES
- DEMOLITIONS AND STOP WORKING ORDERS

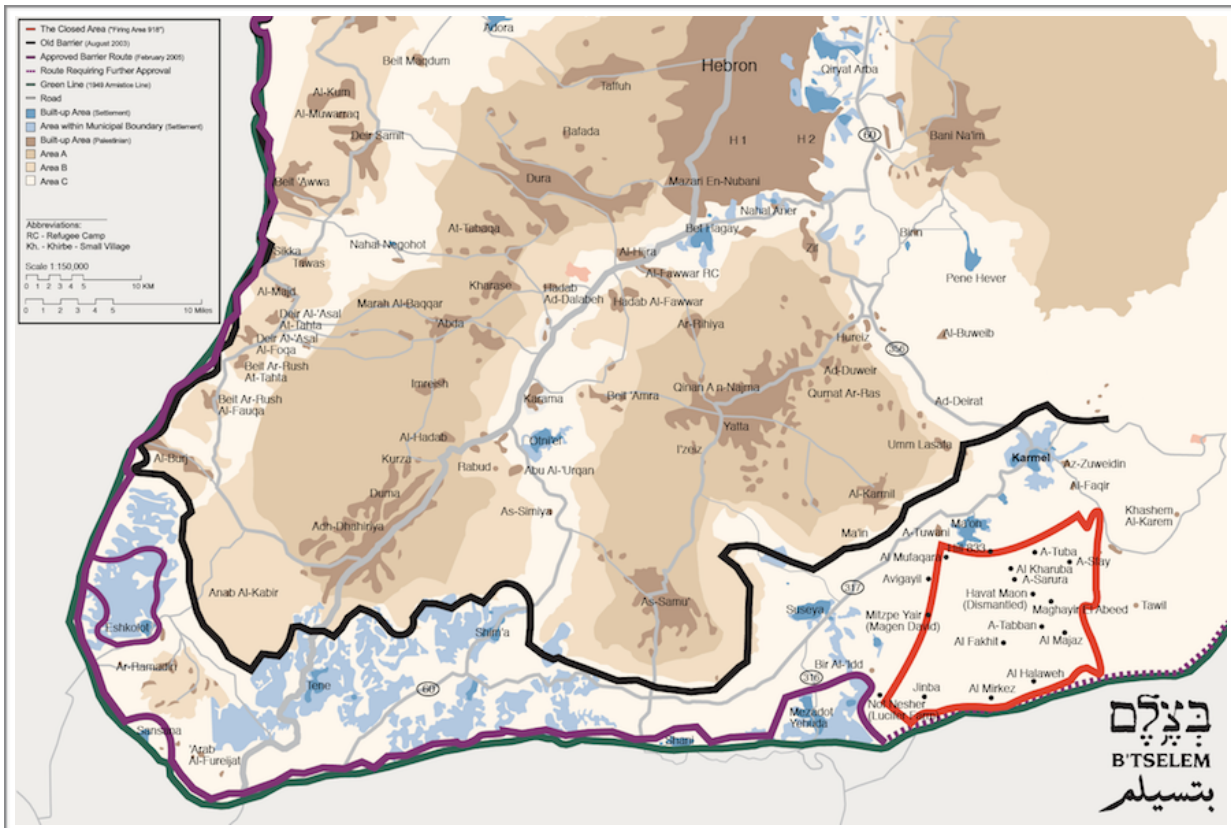
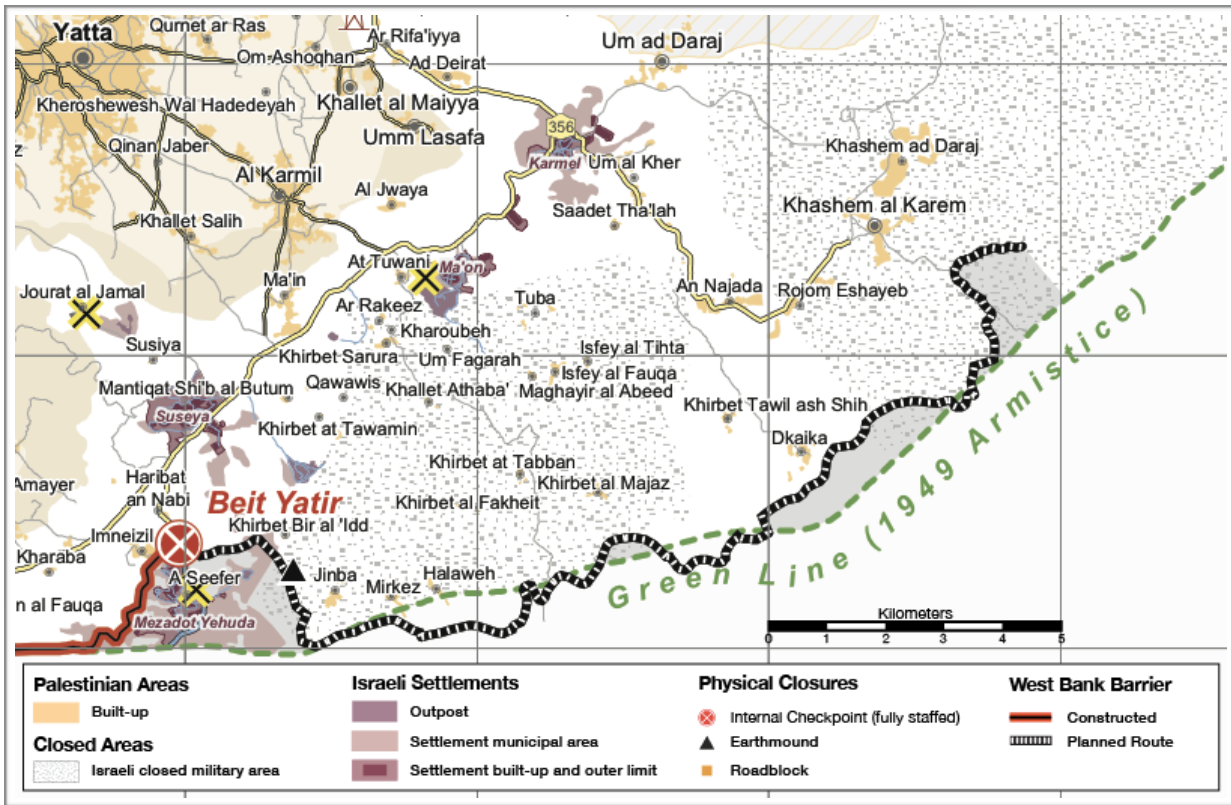
● ISRAELI SETTLERS

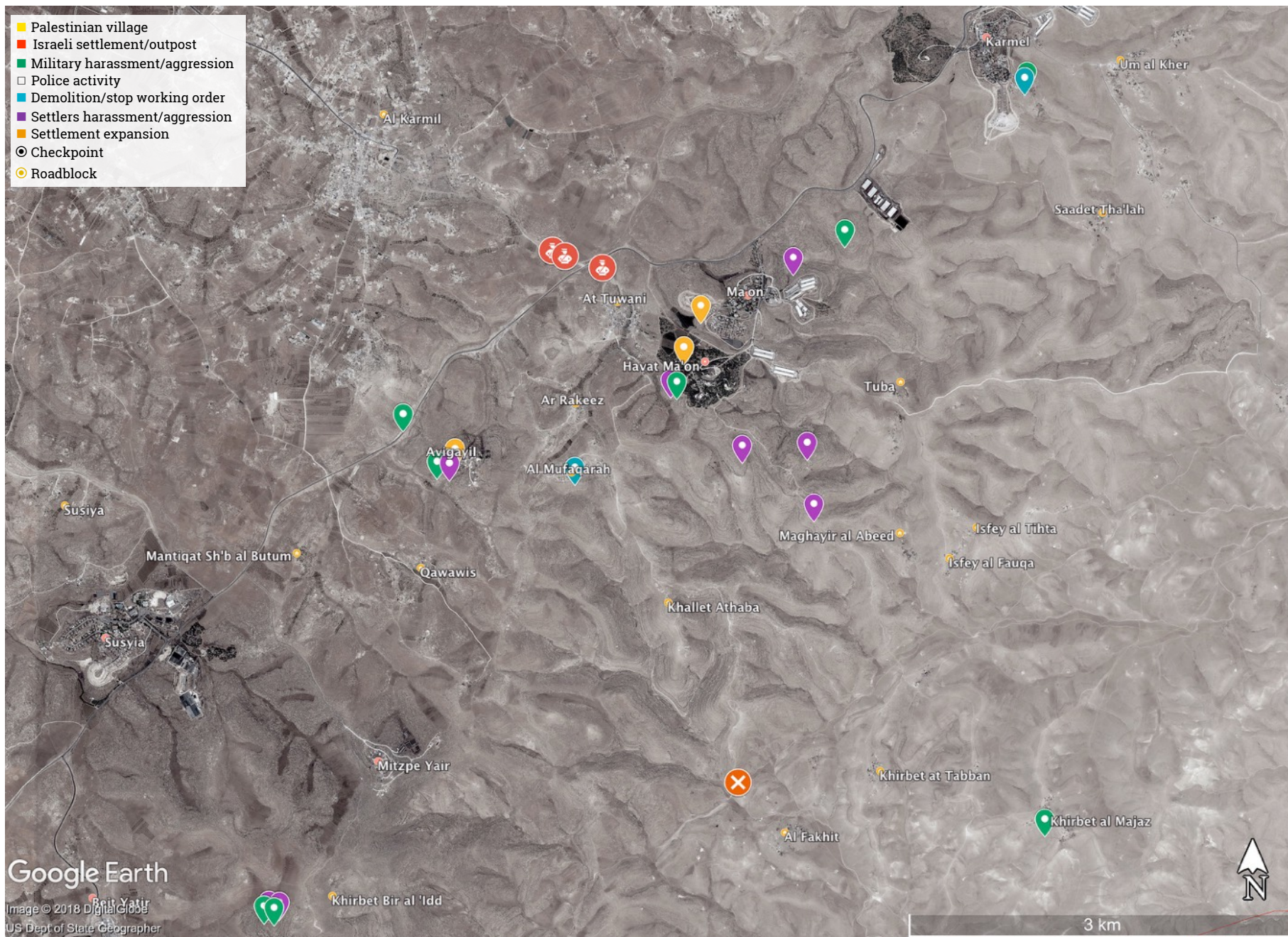
- SETTLERS HARASSMENT AND AGGRESSIONS
- SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

● PALESTINIAN POPULAR STRUGGLE

- POPULAR COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES
- AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES

MAPS





ISRAELI ARMY AND POLICE

SCHOOL PATROL

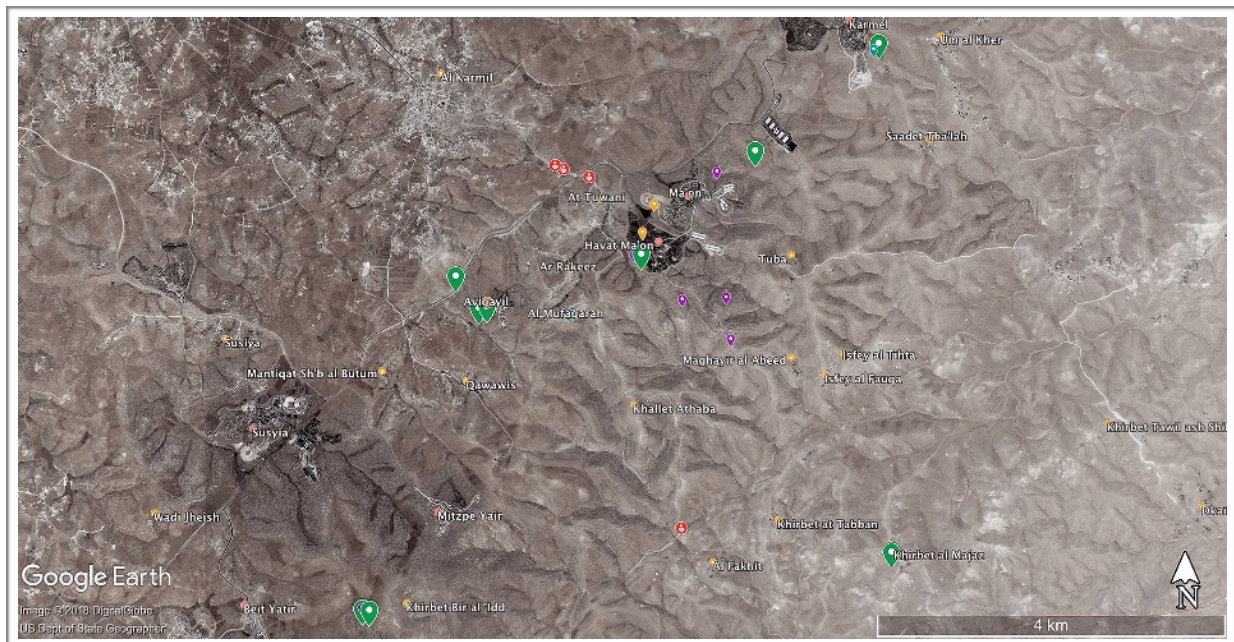
Children from the Palestinian villages of Tuba and Maghayir Al-Abeed began the first semester of the 2017-18 school year with Israeli soldiers escorting them to their school in the nearby Palestinian village of At-Tuwani. This is the 14th continuous year that these children have needed a military escort in order to walk to school safely.

To get to school the children must walk along a road which once provided easy travel between the villages, but which now runs between the Israeli settlement of Ma'on and the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on. For the past thirteen years violent behavior by settlers from the outpost, the existence of which is illegal under both Israeli and International law, has made the road inaccessible to Palestinians. Even escorted by Israeli soldiers the schoolchildren continue to face the possibility of violence, harassment and intimidation as they walk to and from school.

Operation Dove volunteers recorded several misconducts of the Israeli soldiers that put in danger the Palestinian schoolchildren.

During the month of January the military escort arrived on late for 2 times on 9 forcing the children to wait in a dangerous place. In 1 occasions the military escort didn't show up, and children come back home alone using an alternative footpath which runs around the outside of the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on. This longer path takes between 45 minutes and one hour, and is extremely difficult, especially for the youngest children. Even on this longer path the children are vulnerable to violence and harassment from settlers.

MILITARY HARASSMENT AND AGGRESSIONS



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Palestinian village | ■ Military harassment/aggression | ■ Demolition/stop working order | ■ Settlement expansion |
| ■ Israeli settlement/outpost | □ Police activity | ■ Settlers harassment/aggression | ● Checkpoint |

On January 12 at around 9:40 am two settlers from the illegal outpost of Nof Nesher grazed their sheep in the farmed land of a Palestinian man in Bir al 'Idd village, destroying the crop and damaging a water pipe. After ten minutes an Army jeep (#702865) arrived on the spot, two soldiers got out from the jeep and went to talk first with the settlers and then with the Palestinian. The soldiers refused to stop the settlers but stayed in the area watching the situation until 11:12 am, when a DCO car arrived on the spot followed by another Army jeep (#534157). For more than twenty minutes the DCO and the Army spoke. The Palestinians and OD volunteers were driven away and forced to don't tape the scene, while the settlers talked with the Israeli forces. At around 11:45 am a DCO officer went to the Palestinian and explained that the area of the valley where the settlers were grazing the sheep was legally unclear and that the DCO should take a decision about it few days later. The the DCO declared the area of the valley closed to Israelis and gave to the Palestinian a number to call in case of settlers would came back again. At around 11:50 am all the people left the area.

Few days later the Palestinian shepherd of Bir al 'Idd had exactly the same problem with Nof Nesher illegal outpost settlers, he tried to call the number the DCO gave to him, but the person who answer could not speak Arabic, and even when he understood the problem he just ignored it.

On January 13, at about 12:20 AM an Army jeep arrived in Umm Al Kheir village, where some Palestinians and Internationals were building a new house. They spoke with some Palestinians and left in few minutes. At about 1:00 PM an DCO jeep arrived (#8179986) on the spot. The check the situation, spoke with some Palestinians and Internationals about the new building and left the area.

On the morning of 14 January, as Palestinian witness reported to OD volunteers, Israeli Army raided the Palestinian village of Al Majaaz, in Masafer Yatta, using the excuse of a stolen car and taking advantage of the absence of Palestinian men of the village. The soldiers searched several houses for about two hours, scaring women and children.

The army also closed the only road that leads to the village. This road-block comes in addition to the several closures used by the Israeli army in order to make almost impossible the daily life of Masafer Yatta inhabitants since three weeks.

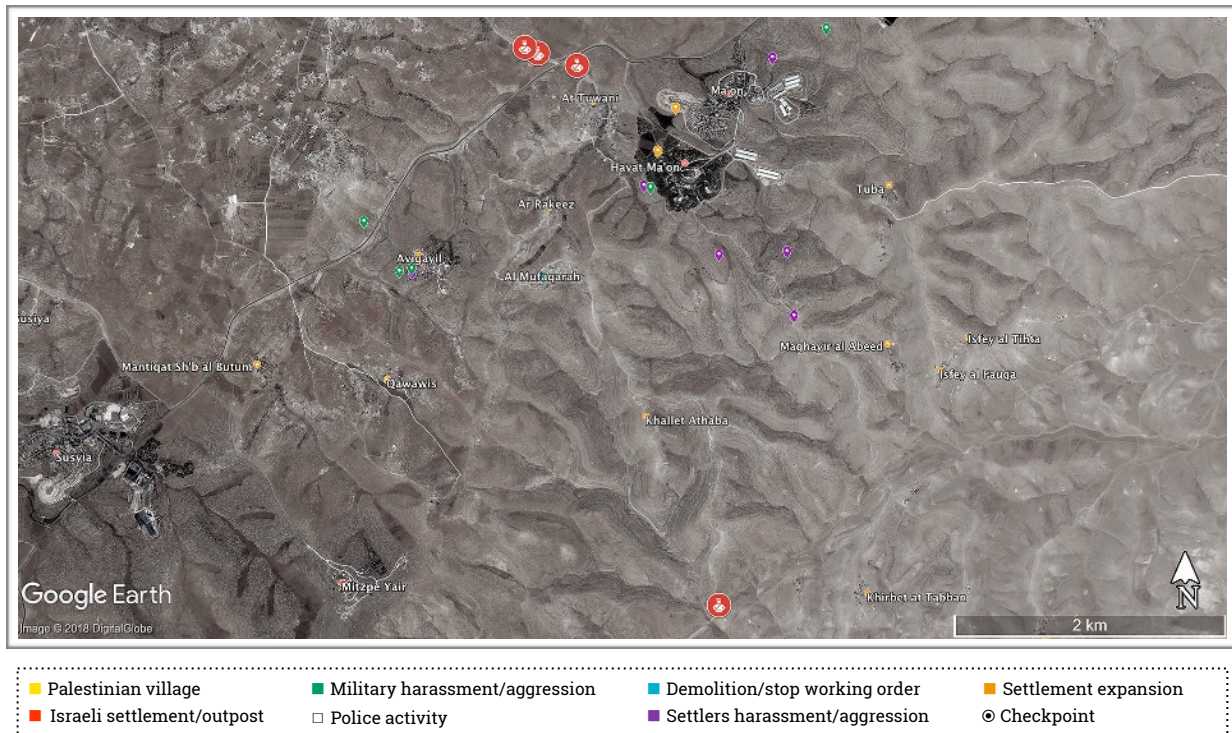
On January 21 around 10 am two Palestinian shepherds from the Palestinian village of Tuba together with OD volunteers, were grazing their flocks in Umm Zeitouna valley, close to the Israeli settlement of Ma'on. Two Israeli settlers saw the shepherds and approached them, which immediately escaped. One hour later, the shepherds had moved with their sheeps close to the cow barns of the Israeli settlement located on the top of a nearby hill, beside the By-pass Road 317. At 12:13 pm an Israeli army jeep (#702865) stopped at the entrance of the cow barns, three soldiers got out of the vehicle and started to approach the shepherds and OD volunteers, that once again escaped towards a safer area.

On January 23 at about 10 am a Palestinian shepherd was grazing his sheep in his land between the Palestinian village of Bir al 'Idd and the illegal outpost of Nof Nesher. Two Israeli soldiers arrived walking from the illegal outpost of Nof Nesher, called by the settlers. The soldiers approached the Palestinian and told him that the area was closed for everyone, Palestinians and Israelis, then they called the DCO who confirmed the order. The Army did not delivered any written copy of the order. At about 10:40 am the soldiers left the area and also the Palestinians shepherd and OD volunteers.

On January 25 at about 11:40 am a Palestinian shepherd was grazing his flock on a Palestinian property land close to the west side of the illegal Israeli outpost of Avigayil. The shepherd was accompanied by two OD volunteers. The supposed security chief of the illegal outpost came down and started to harass the OD volunteers and the Palestinian shepherd. First of all he began taking pictures of the faces of the presents, continuing to repeat that their presence there was illegal. After that he moved close to one of the internationals and acted to have suffered an attack by the international volunteer. Immediately he called the Israeli army. He continued to provoke the Internationals, getting close again to the same volunteer and acted to have received another hit. At 11:48 am he went back to the outpost, waiting there the arrival of the Israeli army. Two soldiers arrived at 12:00 am. The settler returned immediately after. The settler said to the soldiers that it was illegal for the Palestinian and for the internationals to stay there and he accused one of the international to have assaulted him. The soldiers called the Israeli police, believing to the settler's story. In the meanwhile four more soldiers arrived on the place, surrounding the volunteers and preventing them to leave the place. At around 12:30 pm two Israeli policemen arrived and arrested the two Internationals, while the soldiers declared the area a closed military area for 24 hours. The two internationals were released at about 6 pm, without any charge and a 15 days of interdiction from the Hebron district.

CLOSURES

CHECK-POINT



On the 11 of January at about 7 pm three Israeli soldiers with a civil car (#2306171) set a check-point on the road that from the bypass road 317 lead to the Palestinian village of Al Birkeh. They stopped three Palestinian cars and checked the IDs of the drivers. At around 8 PM the soldiers left the spot.

On January 14, OD volunteers took evidences of closures on one of the way (from At Tuwani to Al Fakheit) that connects Masafer Yatta to Yatta town.

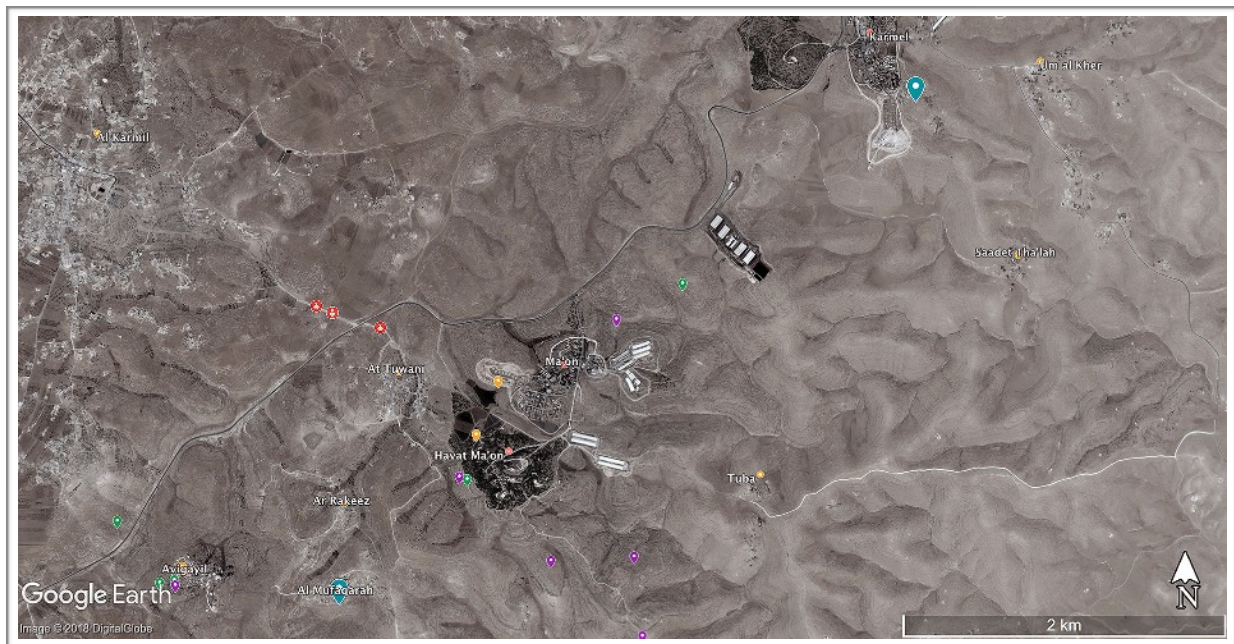
As Amira Hass wrote (Haaretz 7th January 2018), *“on December 26, huge military earth movers showed up, accompanied by soldiers, and destroyed the dirt roads connecting six villages in this area to each other and to the district town of Yatta. The previous month the army blocked a few of the roads with earth mounds, which the residents managed to dismantle. About two weeks ago the army dug wide, deep ditches in two of the roads, rendering them impassable, and rolled gigantic rocks onto a third. These are obstacles the inhabitants were unable to remove. As a result, the price of donkeys rose, say the inhabitants of the cut-off villages – Jinba, Halaweh, Mirkez, Al-Majaz, Al-Fakheit and Al-Tabban [...]. A third road, between the villages of Shi'b al Butum and Al-Fakheit, has also been cut through by a ditch, but the residents managed to fill it with earth. A lightweight vehicle can cross it but not a heavy one, for example a water truck”.*

On January 24, at about 8 am an Israeli army jeep (#706865) set a checkpoint on the road that leads from the bypass road 317 to the Palestinian town of Al Birkeh. Three soldiers got out from the jeep and stopped seven Palestinian cars, they checked drivers IDs and searched the trunks of each car. At about 9:40 am the soldiers left the spot.

On January 27 around 3:30 pm OD volunteers received a call from a Palestinian activist warning them about the presence of Israeli army soldiers on the fields beside the road that lead to the Palestinian village of Al Birkeh. At 3:39 pm OD volunteers reached the entrance of the road, where an Israeli army jeep (#702865) set a checkpoint. Two Israeli army soldiers were outside the jeep and they stopped one Palestinian vehicle for some minutes, causing a total of 11 Palestinian cars to line behind it.

At 3:43 pm OD volunteers on the field received a new call from the same Palestinian activist warning them that more Israeli army soldiers were present further on the road. When OD volunteers reached the spot indicated by the Palestinian activist they found another Israeli army jeep (#534157) and two Israeli soldiers. They had halted a Palestinian car and forced the driver and his passenger, both Palestinians, to come outside the car. As soon as the volunteers asked the Palestinians what's happening the Israeli soldiers told the Palestinians they were free to leave. At 3:53 pm the jeep left the spot.

DEMOLITIONS AND STOP WORKING ORDERS



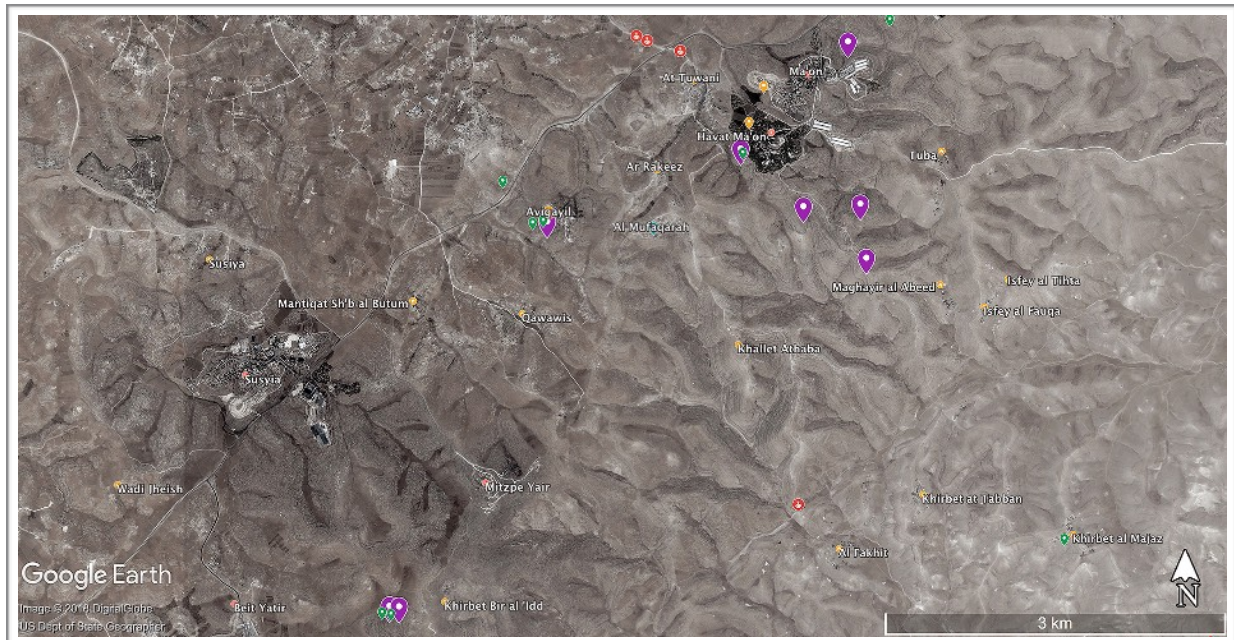
- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Palestinian village | ■ Military harassment/aggression | ■ Demolition/stop working order | ■ Settlement expansion |
| ■ Israeli settlement/outpost | □ Police activity | ■ Settlers harassment/aggression | ● Checkpoint |

On January 10, at around 11.30 am two DCO officers (#9957334) accompanied by Israeli army soldiers delivered a stop working order to a zinc house built by a Palestinian couple in Umm al Kheir. They had already suffered two house demolitions by Israeli army and DCO in 2016. The appeal against the stop working order expires on 21 January 2018.

On January 14, the DCO and the Israeli army delivered a stop-working order for the new mosque that the people of the Palestinian village of Al-Mufaqarah were building. The Israeli forces have already demolished the village mosque twice in 2011 and 2012.

ISRAELI SETTLERS

SETTLERS HARASSMENT AND AGGRESSIONS



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Palestinian village | ■ Military harassment/aggression | ■ Demolition/stop working order | ■ Settlement expansion |
| ■ Israeli settlement/outpost | □ Police activity | ■ Settlers harassment/aggression | ◎ Checkpoint |

On January 12 at around 9:40 am two settlers from the illegal outpost of Nof Nesher grazed their sheep in the farmed land of a Palestinian man in Bir al 'Idd village, destroying the crop and damaging a water pipe. *(For more details about this event see the "Military Harassment and Aggression" section)*

On January 20 at about 3:25 pm a Palestinian boy from the village of Tuba was going to the Palestinian village of At Tuwani and he had to change his path in order to avoid some groups of settlers that were walking in the area, precisely six settlers from the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on where on the top of Old Havat Ma'on hill, four on the road that leads to Old Havat Ma'on and two up on Meshaha hill, near Havat Ma'on illegal outpost. After one hour, at 4:16 pm four Od volunteers were going to the Palestinian village of Tuba and because of the presence of the same settlers they had to take a longer path to reach the village.

On January 21st at 10:21 am two Palestinian shepherds were grazing their flock in Humra valley when three Israeli soldiers lead by the Security Coordinator of the Israeli settlement of Ma'on came out from the Israeli illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on and started to stare at them. As soon as the group saw two OD volunteers approaching, it broke up. At 10.34 three settlers showed up at the border of the Havat Ma'on's grove and started to walk after the shepherds and watch over them too. At 10.47, the Ma'on Security Coordinator's car (#4360713) came out from the same grove, and started to patrol the border of the Israeli outpost. At around 10:50 am he left the area.

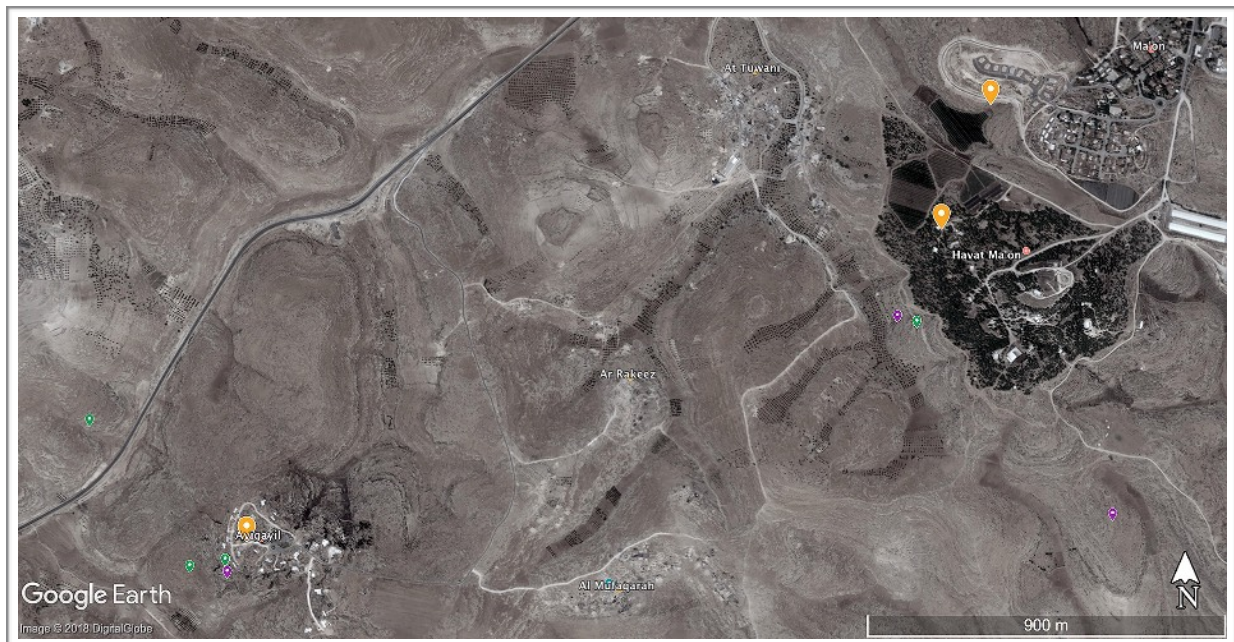
On January 22, at around 1 pm as Palestinian witness reported a Palestinian shepherd was grazing his sheep in the valley that leads from Old Havat Ma'on to Palestinian village of Tuba, when a settler came out from a new building of Havat Ma'on outpost, making the move to go against him. Because of that the shepherd decided to graze in a safer place, and was forced to move.

On January 23 at about 10 am a Palestinian shepherd was grazing his sheep in his land between the Palestinian village of Bir al 'Idd and the illegal outpost of Nof Nesher. Few minutes later a settlers shepherd from the outpost arrived on the spot and started grazing his flock inside the Palestinian farmed field, destroying the crop. After a quarter another settler arrived from Nof Nesher outpost and the two settlers together began to drive away the sheep of the Palestinian. After scared all the sheep and prevented the Palestinian shepherd to look after the flock they left the place at around 10:30 am.

On January 25 at about 11:40 am a Palestinian shepherd was grazing his flock on a Palestinian property land close to the west side of the illegal Israeli outpost of Avigayil. The shepherd was accompanied by two OD volunteers. The supposed security chief of the illegal outpost came down and started to harass the OD volunteers and the Palestinian shepherd. First of all he began taking pictures of the faces of the presents, continuing to repeat that their presence there was illegal. After that he moved close to one of the internationals and acted to have suffered an attack by the international volunteer. Immediately he called the Israeli army. He continued to provoke the Internationals, getting close again to the same volunteer and acted to have received another hit. At 11:48 am he went back to the outpost, waiting there the arrival of the Israeli army. Two soldiers arrived at 12:00 am. The settler returned immediately after. The settler said to the soldiers that it was illegal for the Palestinian and for the internationals to stay there and he accused one of the international to have assaulted him. The soldiers called the Israeli police, believing to the settler's story, despite internationals video proved the opposite. In the meanwhile four more soldiers arrived on the place, surrounding the volunteers and preventing them to leave the place. At around 12:30 pm two Israeli policemen arrived and arrested the two Internationals, while the soldiers declared the area a closed military area for 24 hours. The two internationals were released at about 6 pm, without any charge and a 15 days of interdiction from the Hebron district.

On January 30 a Palestinian young man from the village of Tuba accompanied by two OD volunteers had to change his path to go back home from the Palestinian village of Sarura, in order to avoid two Israeli settlers that was walking up on Meshaha hill. At around 4:20 pm the two settlers realized the presence of the Palestinian, they stopped and started pointed at him and OD volunteers. The settlers waited until the small group was out of sight and then went back to the Illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on at 4:39.

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Palestinian village | ■ Military harassment/aggression | ■ Demolition/stop working order | ■ Settlement expansion |
| ■ Israeli settlement/outpost | □ Police activity | ■ Settlers harassment/aggression | ● Checkpoint |

On January 16 OD volunteers caught evidences of two new houses under construction on the southern edge of the Israeli illegal outpost of Avigayil. On January 22 the volunteers also witnessed some workings on roof of two already existing houses on the Western part of the outpost.

On January 6, 16, 23 and 28 OD volunteers caught multiple evidences of bulldozers and construction vehicles operating at the Northern edge of the Israeli illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on.

On January 3 and January 21 OD volunteers caught evidences of the building of a new wall outside the fence of the Israeli settlement of Ma'on and the expansion of a portion of the fence over the aforementioned wall. The volunteers also witnessed the construction of two new walls inside the fence of the settlement. All the workings affected the northern edge of the settlement of Ma'on. They had continued for the past two months and were completed on January 21.

On January 21 OD volunteers caught evidences of the presence of a new fence in Shab Al Shaadi valley, outside the Southern border of the Israeli settlement of Ma'on.

On the morning of January 31 a convoy made of 1 bulldozer, 3 DCO jeeps and 4 Border Police Jeeps, after facing resistance from the Israeli settlers of the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on (including road closures made of vehicles and stones) reached an illegal construction built by the Israeli settlers on the road that goes from Havat Ma'on outpost to the top of Old Havat Ma'on hill. Between 20 and 30 Israeli settlers were on the spot and protested against the demolition, eventually going into some clashes with the Border Police, which arrested five of them. The demolition finally took place at 11.10 am, and at 11.40 the convoy left the area.

PALESTINIAN POPULAR STRUGGLE

POPULAR COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

On January 13, around 20 people from the South Hebron Hills Popular Committee participated to a protest in Nabi Saleh village for the freedom of all the Palestinian prisoners (in particular Ahed Tamimi, her mother, her aunt and her cousin) and against the US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Israeli army declared Nabi Saleh "closed military zone", sealing its entrances and exits. The Palestinian Authority agency, Wafa, reported that Israeli forces have created barriers on the main road leading to Nabi Saleh and have prevented Palestinians, including journalists, from entering it. The protest began at around 11:00 am in the middle of the village. After some speeches all the participants (Palestinian, Israeli and international activists) moved to the entrance of the village where the Israeli army throw huge number of tear gas. The action ended at around 2 pm.

On January 13, a group of Palestinians and Internationals gathered in Umm Al Kheir in order to finish the construction of a new house. The house is for a Palestinian families and it is under Stop Working Order for the Israeli DCO. The group worked all the morning, paved the new house, despite the presence of Israeli Army.

AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES

During the month of January four delegations from Italy visited At-Tuwani village. OD volunteers explained them the situation in the South Hebron Hills area, the daily problems with occupation forces and the nonviolent resistance of the Palestinian community.

The groups visited the Women's cooperative and went to Sumud Freedom Camp, where Palestinian activists described them the history of Sarura and the ongoing projects of the Sumud Freedom Camp. During this month a group of Palestinian writers and intellectuals visited Sarura village/Sumud Camp. Boys and girls from South Hebron Hills told them about their stories of reconstruction and resistance in the village, and the women cooked for them. The guests spoke about hope: they thought they were coming to bring hope to these place, but they left, having received more from them than they expected.

On January 5, OD volunteers attended a meeting with Michael Forst from UN, Sandra Petersen from NHRF and representatives of other human rights defenders organizations such as Breaking the Silence, Ta'ayush, B'Tselem on the problems faced by HR defenders operating in the West Bank.

On January 8, OD volunteers and the leader of the Popular Committee of the SHH accompanied the Italian activist and former Vice-President of the European Parliament Luisa Morgantini in a series of meetings with: the Dean of the Yatta branch of Jerusalem University, the Mayor of the city of Yatta, representatives of the Workers Union of Yatta, the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development. During these meetings the problems faced by each one of the aforementioned institutions and the possible solutions for such problems were discussed.

On January 30 OD volunteers attended a meeting in the Sumud Freedom Camp of Sarura village. Representatives of the South Hebron Hills' Popular Committee met a delegation of women led by the Palestinian former Ministry of Women Affairs Zahera Kamal and the Italian activist and former vice-President of the European Parliament Luisa Morgantini. Both the Ministry and Luisa Morgantini stated their full support and solidarity to the Sumud Freedom Camp and to the Popular Committee.