

HILLS UNDER SIEGE

**Israeli Settler Violence
and Systemic Impunity
in Masafer Yatta
(2010-2025)**



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FOREWORD

Francesca Albanese

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

Israel's settler-colonial project in occupied Palestine has never advanced through military force alone. It relies on a mutually reinforcing architecture of legal and administrative measures, military domination, settlement expansion and settler violence, each enabling the others, to dispossess Palestinians of their land and progressively replace them with Israeli settlers. Settlers - Israeli civilians residing in settlements established in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as part of Israel's unlawful policy of transferring its civilian population into occupied territory and, in the majority of cases, situated on land unlawfully seized from Palestinians - are not incidental to this machinery; they are its most effective agents, at times directly giving directions to soldiers, for instance on who (among the Palestinians) to arrest.

Operazione Colomba's *Hills Under Siege* exposes this reality through fifteen years of documentation from Masafer Yatta. Its 2,558 recorded incidents - ranging from harassment and physical aggressions, to attacks on Palestinian property or livestock - reveal how that violence is a sustained means of territorial dispossession. Shepherds are driven from grazing lands, movement is obstructed, homes and water infrastructure attacked,

crops and livestock destroyed, and children threatened on their way to school. Over time, these acts attack the interconnected conditions that allow a people to remain on their land, forcing them to leave. This is precisely the cumulative logic underpinning settler colonialism, making Palestinian life increasingly untenable while creating the conditions for its territorial and demographic replacement.

The report's 15-year perspective shows that the escalation witnessed since October 2023 signals acceleration of a process long underway. Increasingly severe attacks and the emergence of armed "settler-soldiers", coupled with near-total impunity even when Israeli soldiers or police are present, further collapse the purported distinction between settler and State violence. What appears as private violence is protected by and functional to a wider machinery of dispossession.

Meanwhile the International Court of Justice in its July 2024 Advisory Opinion found Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory unlawful.

In my report "Genocide as Colonial Erasure", I warned that the destruction inflicted on Gaza was "metastasizing to the West Bank", accelerating longstanding patterns of displacement and replacement, ethnic cleansing

and apartheid. What takes the form of mass destruction in Gaza manifests through different, but connected, methods in the West Bank. Masafer Yatta shows this architecture in motion: administrative restrictions facilitate dispossession, military power enforces it, and settler violence advances and entrenches it on the ground.

I wish to acknowledge the crucial work of Operazione Colomba, to which I extend my gratitude, and whose volunteers bear witness to crimes that would otherwise escape scrutiny, hidden within the culpable silence Apartheid Israel has built around its actions thanks to the complicity of too many.

Third States raise weak voices of condemnation, but continue to fail to act decisively and do what is not only morally necessary but legally required under international law: cutting ties with a State responsible for apartheid, genocide and an ever-entrenched illegal occupation.

What these volunteers do is precious: it offers documentation and a form of protection at great personal risk. I wish every State official would show even an inch of this courage in shaping their foreign policy. I would encourage everyone to join Operazione Colomba's mission, in whatever way feasible to them.

At a time when the unlawfulness of Israel's continued presence in occupied Palestinian territory has been authoritatively established, documentation as this report must serve not merely to bear witness, but to compel accountability and the dismantling of the structures that sustain Palestinian erasure and genocide. Once, and for all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses fifteen years of documented settler violence in the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta, based on incidents directly witnessed and recorded by Operazione Colomba volunteers between 2010 and 2025. The dataset includes 2,558 cases of harassment, physical aggression, and damage to property or livestock, supported by audiovisual evidence and standardized entries in the project's "serious log" database.

Harassment is the most frequent form of violence (1,691 incidents), occurring on an almost daily basis and significantly restricting Palestinian movement, grazing, and agricultural activity. Additional episodes of physical assault (335) and property destruction (532) demonstrate the material and bodily impacts of this violence. On average, more than 170 incidents are recorded each year, showing that Palestinians in Masafer Yatta live with near-continuous settler presence and threat.

Between 2020 and 2022, when volunteers could not maintain a continuous field presence due to COVID-19 restrictions, incidents were documented indirectly through Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders and later harmonised into the dataset using Operazione Colomba's classification standards. The analysis highlights the participation of settler minors, the increasing role

of settler-soldiers after October 2023, and the near-total absence of consequences for settlers, even when military or police forces are present.

While geographically specific, the findings provide a clear snapshot of broader dynamics in Area C of the West Bank. Data from 2025 indicates that this violence is not only continuing but consolidating at a higher level: harassment has reached 160 cases (compared to a long-term average of 113), damage to property or animals has risen to 100 cases (from an average of 35), and although recorded physical aggression remains numerically close to its historical average, its severity has increased, including cases of permanent injury and death. The sustained, recurrent, and unpunished violence documented here reflects a wider system of dispossession and territorial expansion that shapes Palestinian daily life and threatens the Palestinian communities in Masafer Yatta.

PREMISE

The outbreak of the war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, has drawn significant international media and political attention to the Palestinian people. According to data reported the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), updated as of October 22, 2025, since the beginning of the war, Israel has killed at least 68,234 Palestinians, including more than 20,000 children (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territory [OCHA oPt], 2025). Beyond Gaza, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have also faced significant violence and repression since October 2023. According to *Al Jazeera*, at least 870 Palestinians, including 177 children, have been killed and more than 6,700 wounded in attacks carried out by the Israeli army and Israeli settlers across the West Bank (*Al Jazeera*, 2025). In addition, Israeli forces have arrested at least 13,500 Palestinians, including 177 children, and demolished more than 2,100 structures, resulting in the displacement of over 6,700 people throughout the occupied territory (ibid)."

Joint assessments by OCHA, WHO, and Palestinian authorities show catastrophic levels of destruction across the Gaza Strip. 78% percent of all structures are destroyed or damaged, alongside 88% of commerce and industry establishments and 77% of the

road network (ibid). Health service capacity has been severely compromised: only 8 hospitals in Gaza remain functional, 3 are partially functional, and 22 are non-functional (ibid). Nutrition needs have also reached critical levels. An estimated 132,000 children aged 6–59 months and 55,500 pregnant and breastfeeding women are projected to face acute malnutrition through June 2026, including 41,000 cases of severe child malnutrition (ibid).

The international focus is therefore on what Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, described as genocide in a report for the Human Rights Council (Albanese, 2024). Other equally significant terms have started to be used outside of academic circles to describe the war on Gaza. *Urbicide* – the deliberate destruction of a city, *domicide* – the deliberate and systematic destruction of homes, *politicide* – the silencing of the Palestinian political identity by major political actors, and *ecocide* – the intentional destruction of the ecosystem and climate of a place. Additionally, the term *scholasticide* has been used to describe the deliberate targeting and destruction of educational infrastructure, including schools, universities, archives, and the killing of students and educators, with the aim of erasing a people's intellectual life, knowledge sys-

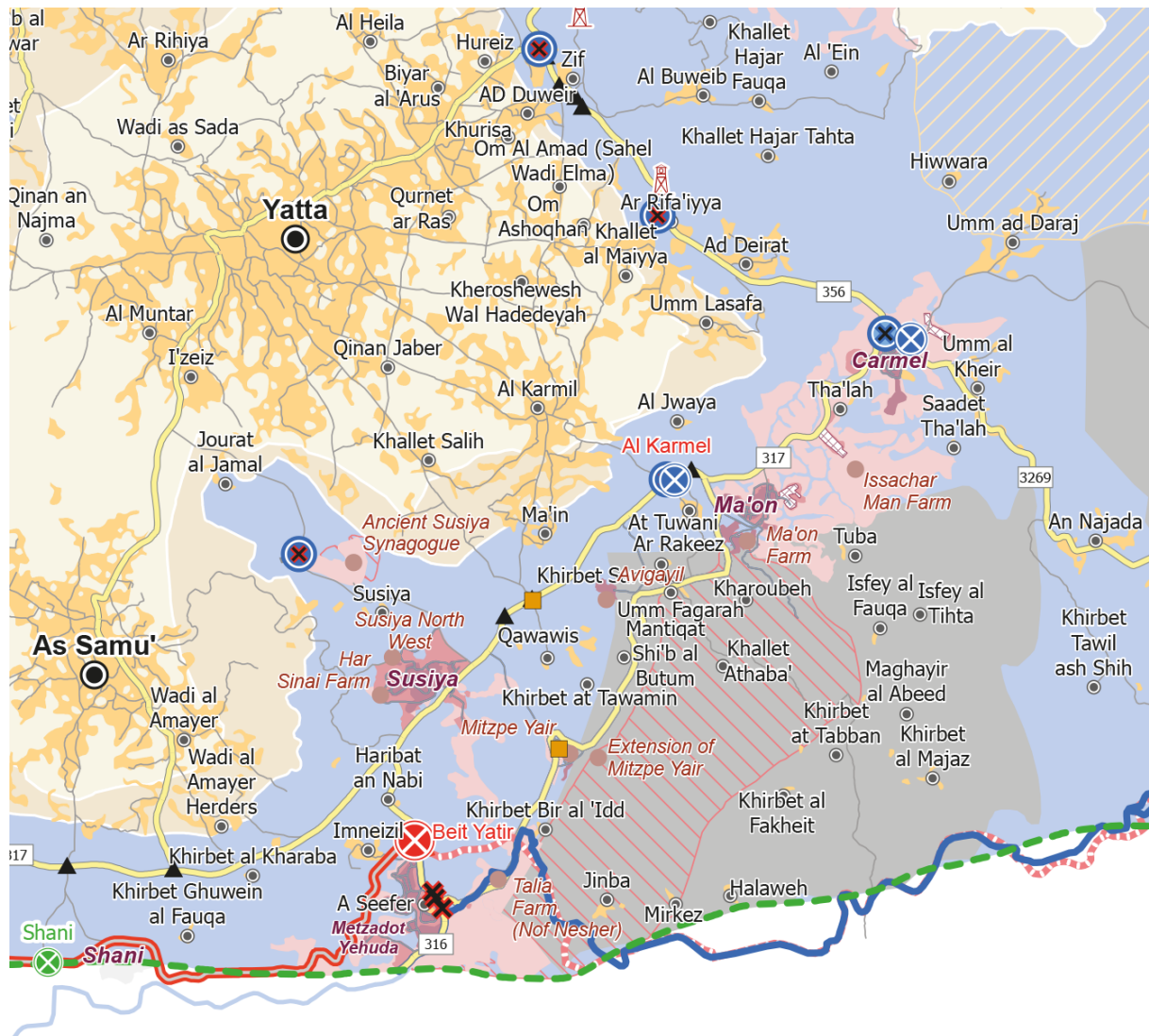
tems, and capacity for future self-determination. The mention of these terms provides various useful frameworks for viewing not only the war in Gaza but also the ongoing colonization in Palestine from 1948 to the present.

While Israel's colonial policy in the Gaza Strip has primarily used tools such as embargoes, technological control, high-intensity wars, and now genocide, what has been described as settler colonialism is taking place in the occupied territories of the West Bank. Historian Ilan Pappé distinguishes between colonialism and settler colonialism based on three main differences. First, settlers rely on an imperial power only at the beginning of the conquest of a territory and soon pursue their own nationalistic aspirations. Second, settler colonialism is not limited to extracting resources from the land – as was the case with the colonial activities of empires – but rather involves the desire to conquer and appropriate the land. Third, within a settler colonial framework, settlers are “refugees of sorts, seeking not just a home but a homeland,” and consequently, the indigenous populations must be displaced and substituted to make way for a national identity that is considered more “original” than that of the natives (Pappé, 2017).

This is where the desire to write this report comes from. Operazione Colomba (Operation Dove) has been present in the West Bank, particularly in the Palestinian com-

munities of the South Hebron Hills – Masafer Yatta, for more than twenty years. In these twenty years, we have documented, experienced, witnessed, and collected data that tell the story of the violent methods by which settlers seize Palestinian land and attempt to displace the local population. The violence perpetrated by the settlers, as we will see, affects not only the Palestinians but involves an entire ecosystem, starting with infrastructure — homes, wells, schools, communities (*domicide*) — as well as crops and water resources (*ecocide*), educational institutions and knowledge systems (*scholasticide*) and the identity of entire communities (*politicide*). This report aims to detail the methods of settler colonialism carried out by Israel in the Palestinian communities of the South Hebron Hills and the repercussions these have on their survival. In outlining the various systems of violence implemented by Israeli settlers, the goal is to accurately document and denounce the colonial policies pursued by Israel in the West Bank.

MAP



WEST BANK BARRIER			
	Constructed Concrete	 Constructed Fence	 Planned
	Agricultural Gate		
MOVEMENT OBSTACLES			
	Checkpoint (Permanently Staffed)		Observation Tower
	Checkpoint on the Green Line		Earthmound
	Partial Checkpoint (Occasionally Staffed)		Roadblock
	Partial checkpoint with open gate		Earth Wall
	Partial checkpoint with closed gate		Road Barrier
	Road Gate (Usually Closed)		Trench
	Road Gate (Usually Open)		
CIVIL INFRASTRUCTURE			
	Prohibited Road (Palestinian Vehicular use Forbidden)		
	Main Road		Tunnel/Underpass
	Other Road		
	Roads Inside Israeli Settlements and Military Bases		

CLOSED AND RESTRICTED AREAS			
	Israeli Military Base Access is Prohibited		East Jerusalem (Based on Israel's Unilateral Annexation) (Palestinians From Other Parts of the OPT Generally Require Permits to Enter)
	Israeli Firing Zone and Jordan Valley Military Buffer Zone		Israeli Nature Reserve (Land Use is Restricted)
ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS			
	Built-up Area and Outer Limit		Municipal Area
	Industrial Park, Dumping Site, Stone-Cutting Quarry or Solar Panel Farm		Land Cultivated by Settlers
	Urban Israeli Settlement Compound		
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN INTERIM AGREEMENTS			
	Area A and H1	Palestinian Authority civil and security control	
	Area B	Palestinian Authority civil control and Israeli security control	
	Area C	Israeli civil and security control	
	H2 (Hebron)	Palestinian Hebron Municipality civil control and Israeli security control	
	Intended Nature Reserve	Full Israeli control over security, planning and construction	
PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES			
	Governorate Capital		0 - 5,000 Residents
	Governorate Boundary		5,001 - 15,000 Residents
	Built-up Area		> 15,000 Residents

Source: OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory

INTRODUCTION

The area of the South Hebron Hills – also known as Masafer Yatta – is located in the southern part of West Bank and, according to the Oslo II Accord, it falls under the area C denomination. After the 1995 Oslo II Accord, the West Bank was divided into three areas: A, B, and C. Area A is solely under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority. Area B is under the jurisdiction of both the Palestinian National Authority and the Israeli authority. Conversely, area C – which constitutes more than half of the West Bank and it keeps on expanding – is solely administered by the Israeli civil and military authority. Area C is where Israeli settlements have been established illegally.

Besides the official denominations, Israel uses - among others - military strategies to restrict access to the land. During the 1980s, a part of the Masafer Yatta area was declared a “Firing Zone 918” by the Israeli Government. The area, declared a closed military zone, spanned 30,000 dunams and encompassed twelve villages: a-Tuba, al-Muqaqara, a-Sfay, Maghayir el-Abeed, al-Majaz, a-Tabban, al-Fakhit, al-Halaweh, al-Mirkez, Jinba, al-Kharuba, and a-Sarura (Ashkar, 2005).

As previously mentioned, Area C is where Israeli settlements have been established and continue to expand. In the 1980s, as part of Israel's de facto annexation of occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza



Figure 1 Settler soldiers in Masafer Yatta (credits: Operazione Colomba)

— a process that began after 1967 (Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [CEIRPP], 1984) and is still ongoing (B'Tselem, 2019) — more settlements were built in the Masafer Yatta area. Specifically, during this time, the Israeli settlements of Carmel, Ma'on, Susiya, and Me zadot Yehuda ("Beit Yatir") were established in the South Hebron Hills. Later, settlers set up additional outposts at Susiya Northwest, Avigayil, Mitzpe Yair ("Magen David"), Nof Nesher ("Havat Lucifer"), and Havat Ma'on. All these outposts were constructed without official construction plans or land allocation from authorities. Despite this, the buildings have not been demolished. They are connected by paved roads to the main thoroughfares and have access to water infrastructure and the power grid (Kadman, 2013).

At the same time, the Israeli Civil Administration does not recognize the Masafer Yatta villages and refuses to draft master plans for them, with the sole exception of the village of a-Tuwani, which received a plan in 2008. Without a master plan, the Civil Administration denies these villages construction permits for housing, public buildings, agricultural structures, and infrastructure. As a result, residents have no choice but to build without permits and live under the constant threat of demolition. Additionally, the surrounding villages are not connected to reliable power and water supplies. (ibid).

Firing Zone 918: Military Training Area and Instrument of Displacement

In November 1999, Israeli military forces and Civil Administration officials expelled residents of the Firing Zone 918 and confiscated their possessions. The inhabitants were forcibly displaced in the nearby villages. Despite the hard situation, the Palestinian residents decided to petition the Israeli High Court of Justice against their expulsion (Ashkar, 2005). This decision started a strenuous legal process.

In January 2013, ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel) and Attorney Shlomo Lecker filed new petitions on behalf of the residents. Once more, the HCJ issued an interim injunction forbidding the state from expelling the residents. In August 2020, the state repeated the claim against the petitioners, accusing them of not being permanent residents of the area when it was declared a "firing zone", and therefore with no right to continue living in their homes (B'Tselem, 2022).

The final ruling of the HCJ arrived on the 4th of May 2022: the High Court of Justice rejected the Palestinian petition. Consequently, all the inhabitants of the Firing Zone 918 are at imminent risk of forced evictions, transfers, and displacement (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territory [OCHA oPt], 2022).

Beyond its legal dimension, Firing Zone 918 exemplifies the use of military zoning as a tool of territorial control and population displacement. Although the area has been designated by Israeli authorities as a closed military training zone since the 1980s, it has remained continuously inhabited by Palestinian civilian communities whose presence predates the declaration. Despite this, the Israeli military regularly conducts training exercises in and around these villages, effectively transforming civilian space into an active military environment.

The firing zone encompasses a cluster of rural Palestinian villages whose populations depend primarily on herding and small-scale agriculture. For example, Al-Fakhit consists of approximately five families, around forty residents, and roughly one thousand sheep (internal field documentation, Operazione Colomba, 2023). The village hosts a secondary school serving between seventy and eighty students from Al-Fakhit itself as well as from surrounding communities in Masafer Yatta. Students reach the school either on foot or by vehicle, often along unpaved roads where they encounter soldiers and settlers. Military presence along these routes has resulted in repeated intimidation, generating fear among children commuting to school.

Al-Halaweh is home to roughly one hundred residents and approximately three thousand animals (ibid). Military exercises are conducted not only in proximity to the village but also within the residential area itself, including among tents and dwellings. The long-term impact of these exercises has included civilian casualties caused by unexploded ordnance, with documented deaths and injuries occurring during earlier phases of intensive training. Students from Al-Halaweh – and more recently a-Tuba and Maghayir el-Abeed – attend schools in Al-Fakhit and face similar dangers during daily travel, including harassment and the risk of violent encounters (Operazione Colomba, 2025).

Al-Mirkez comprises around nine families and seventy to eighty residents (internal field documentation, Operazione Colomba, 2023). Military raids occur throughout the year, and live-fire exercises are conducted on nearby hills that constitute the community's only viable grazing land. Restrictions on access to pasture areas have resulted in repeated confiscations of livestock, including entire herds that were never returned, causing severe economic harm and long-term destabilisation of livelihoods. Despite this, the community remains dependent on these lands for survival.

Jinba is one of the larger villages within the firing zone, with approximately seventeen families, one hundred and forty residents, and around three thousand animals (ibid). It contains a primary school attended by about

thirty-five children, while secondary-school students must travel to Al-Fakhit or Yatta. Military training exercises are routinely conducted inside the village, including practices that simulate house searches. Residents are frequently forced out of their homes during these drills, including in winter conditions, under security pretexts unrelated to the community itself.

Across Firing Zone 918, the majority of Palestinian structures — including homes, animal shelters, schools, and basic facilities — are subject to demolition orders due to the systematic refusal of the Israeli Civil Administration to approve master plans or issue building permits. The secondary school in Al-Fakhit, despite serving multiple communities and fulfilling a critical educational function, has repeatedly faced the threat of demolition. Similar orders affect multiple structures in Al-Halaweh, Al-Mirkez, and Jinba, placing the entire civilian infrastructure of the area under constant risk.

This legal and administrative regime stands in contrast to the treatment of Israeli settlers living within the same area. While Palestinian construction is criminalised, Israeli outposts — including at least three newly established since October 7th, 2023 (ibid) — have expanded within Firing Zone 918 without approved plans. These outposts have not been demolished, nor have their residents been subjected to the restrictions imposed on Palestinian communities, revealing a dual

legal system operating within the same geographic space.

The settlers: Ideology, Economy, and Territorial Control

After the HCJ rejection, the international campaign ‘Save Masafer Yatta’ – started by the Palestinian activist group *Youth of Sumud* - was born to spread information and increase attention towards the unlawful displacement of the Palestinian community of the area. In fact, as the campaign and activists underline, Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits the deportation of inhabitants from an occupied country (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 1958).

The presence of Israeli settlements and outposts, coupled with the enforcement of arbitrary martial law, prevents Palestinian people from living freely on their own land. It is important to specify why settlements present an existential threat to the lives of Palestinians. To do this, a distinction between the different reasons for settlement is warranted. Although these categories are not intended to be taken as fixed and can, in fact, overlap, settlers can be roughly divided into four groups.

1. Religious-nationalist settlers: these are people who have moved to the West Bank

for ideological reasons. They take scriptures literally and believe that the religious sites present in the West Bank – such as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (Al Khalil, in its Palestinian nomenclature), Shiloh, and the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus – are part of the Land of Israel promised to the Jewish people by God, hence the entire area should be settled.

Their conviction stems from the Book of Exodus in the Torah, verse 23:31, which reads *"I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you."* (Exodus 23:31, NIV). A prime example of religious nationalist settlers is the *Gush Emunim* movement ("Bloc of the Faithful"), which was initiated in 1977 by a group of Israeli settlers ideologically committed to settling 'Eretz Yisrael' in the West Bank. That same year, the construction of settlements was officially incorporated into the government agenda (Azarov, 2013).

For this reason, religious-nationalist settlers see the establishment of the state of Israel – to be intended as the homeland of the Jewish people – as a mandate from God, hence to be pursued by all means necessary. These means range from settling and working the land while simultaneously making it inaccessible to Palestinians, to expropriating it, to appropriating the lifestyle and supplanting the native population by force (Wolfe, 2006;

Braverman, 2008, 2021). Settlers are often armed and pursue their settlement activities with the aid of military equipment, as it will be further elaborated in the rest of this report.

2. Ultra-Orthodox settlers: The Ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi, community often resides in their own settlements, such as Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, two of the most populated settlements in the West Bank. These settlements are typically located near the Green Line, the 1949 Armistice Line separating Israel from the West Bank. Unlike other settlers, the Ultra-Orthodox do not usually live in these areas for ideological reasons but because the housing is more affordable (Liebermann, 2017).

3. Economic settlers: Similar to the Ultra-Orthodox, these are settlers who have not necessarily moved for ideological reasons but rather for economic incentives. Some secular settlers, along with others, choose to live in settlements near the Green Line and within settlement blocs due to the affordability of housing and financial benefits (B'Tselem, 2002). For instance, Ariel, a settlement in the northern West Bank, has a predominantly secular population and convenient access to highways that connect to Israel's economic centers (Liebermann, 2017).

4. Jordan Valley settlers: The Jordan Valley, which makes up over a fifth of the West Bank, is a crucial area due to its vital land

reserves and abundant water resources, including a third of the West Bank's underground water (Al-Haq, 2018). It also holds significant potential for agriculture, industry, and tourism. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, a series of settlements were established along the Jordan River in the Jordan Valley. These settlements, primarily agricultural towns, were strategically placed by settlers who viewed themselves as the first line of defense, taking advantage of the valley's fertile land.

In the Masafer Yatta area, specifically in the settlements and outposts mentioned above, the first category is the most prominent. Just as an example, Baruch Goldstein, the American-Israeli settler who carried out the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre — targeting Palestinian worshipers and killing 29 of them — had settled in Kiryat Arba, an Israeli settlement close to Hebron. Although this is a large-scale terrorist example, smaller in size of victims but not in impact, acts of terror perpetrated by Israeli settlers happen on a daily basis. Destruction of crops, olive trees — which are symbolically and economically significant—, burning of cars, fields, houses, and animals have been well documented (ibid). Regarding physical harm to humans, the harassment of Palestinians—including beatings, shootings, blocking access to land, and preventing access to education (such as attacks on children on their way to school)—has been well documented by various sources, including ourselves. The U.S. State

Department's 2012 report on terrorism details various cases of settler violence, including those labeled as 'Price Tag' attacks, which it describes as forms of "homegrown terror" in accordance also with Israeli officials' definition (ibid).

Operazione Colomba in Masafer Yatta

Operazione Colomba began its presence in the Masafer Yatta area at the beginning of the 2000s in the context of systematic settler violence targeting Palestinian children's access to education. Children from the villages of a-Tuba and Maghayir al-Abeed were required to walk daily to the village of a-Tuwani in order to attend school. Following the establishment of the settlement of Ma'on and the expansion of the outpost of Havat Ma'on, this journey necessitated crossing areas under settler control, where repeated attacks and intimidation occurred.

Initially, Palestinian adults, as well as Israeli activists from the Ta'ayush group, accompanied the children on their route; however, they too were subjected to settler violence. In response, the Popular Resistance Committee of the South Hebron Hills called for an international protective presence to accompany the children. International volunteers who responded to this call (Operazione Colomba and Community Peacemaker Team/CPT), were themselves exposed to harassment and

attacks, highlighting both the intensity of settler violence and the sense of near impunity that has characterised settlers' activities in the area.

Following sustained pressure, the Knesset Committee for the Rights of the Child recommended that the Israeli military escort the children along the shortest route to school, a practice later implemented by the army starting from November 2004. Despite this formal decision, the implementation of the escort was inconsistent and unreliable. Military accompaniment was frequently delayed, arbitrarily altered, or entirely absent. Settlers continued to harass, threaten, and physically attack the children during escorted journeys, often in the presence of soldiers who failed to intervene (internal field documentation, *Operazione Colomba*, 2005-2023). On multiple occasions, settlers blocked roads, followed the children while shouting threats, threw stones, or attempted physical assaults, including incidents involving sticks and dogs. Law enforcement and military forces repeatedly refrained from acting to prevent these attacks.

The pattern of violence, intimidation, and institutional failure surrounding the school route made clear that access to education for Palestinian children was being systematically obstructed. It was within this context that *Operazione Colomba* established a continuous presence in Masafer Yatta, providing nonviolent protective accompaniment, documentation of violations, and international

witnessing along school routes and in nearby communities. The organisation's presence aimed to mitigate immediate risks to children, expose the structural nature of settler violence, and challenge the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.

Following the permanent suspension of the military escort after 7 October 2023, children from a-Tuba and Maghayir al-Abeed were forced to suspend attendance at the school in a-Tuwani and eventually relocate to the school in Al-Fakhit, underscoring the long-term consequences of settler violence and the failure of protective mechanisms.

This introductory sketch should already outline that inside the West Bank, and indeed the Masafer Yatta area, there exists not only a condition of occupation but also a deliberate effort to displace the indigenous population from their land — an act that can be characterized as ongoing ethnic cleansing. When examining the stark contrast in living conditions and legal status between Israeli settlers and Palestinians, the underlying apartheid logic of Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories becomes evident. In the sections that follow, we will focus on delineating the settlers' violence that has been documented by *Operazione Colomba* volunteers in the Masafer Yatta area.

METHODOLOGY

The data analysed in this report was collected by Operazione Colomba volunteers in the Masafer Yatta area between 2010 and 2025. Our method of documentation is based exclusively on incidents of harassment or violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers and/or occupation forces that volunteers directly witness. Volunteers record events only when they are physically present in the field, for example, while accompanying Palestinian shepherds during daily activities or when responding to emergency calls. This ensures that all data recorded is documentable and verifiable through photos and videos taken at the moment of the incident, though it also introduces limitations that are discussed later in this report.

An exception to this methodology applies to the period between 2020 and 2022. Due to COVID-19–related travel restrictions, Operazione Colomba volunteers were unable to maintain a continuous physical presence in the field. During this time, data was collected indirectly through Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders who continued to document incidents of settler violence and harassment in the area. These actors shared their documentation with Operazione Colomba, including written reports, photographs, and videos. Because their methods of data collection and categorisation differed

from Operazione Colomba’s established documentation protocols, this material required a process of harmonisation before being incorporated into the dataset. This involved re-coding incidents to align with existing categories, standardising terminology, and cross-checking narrative descriptions to ensure internal consistency with the rest of the archive.

For every incident witnessed, volunteers create a digital folder labelled with the date and event name, where all audiovisual evidence is stored. Initially, the material is saved on the project computer and later archived on project-owned external hard drives. Alongside this, volunteers complete a structured database entry in what we call the “serious log,” which forms the core dataset used in this analysis. For each episode of settler violence, standardised information is recorded: date, location, number of settlers involved (including minors), type of incident (harassment, aggression, or damage to property/animals), number of Palestinians and internationals attacked (adults and minors), presence and timing of Israeli army or police, presence of settler-soldiers (added after October 7th, 2023), whether any repercussions occurred for settlers, type of evidence collected (photo, video, or both), and a narrative description of the events.

Here, briefly described are the different categories used:

Aggression (overt physical violence): All incidents involving Israeli settlers and Palestinians in which settlers committed acts of overt physical violence against Palestinians. By "overt physical violence," we refer to actions such as hitting, shoving, or pushing, as well as more severe assaults involving weapons—ranging from blunt objects (e.g., sticks, metal bars, hammers), to flail-type weapons (e.g., nunchucks), and firearms (e.g., handguns, assault rifles, automatic weapons).

Harassment (not physical violence): All incidents in which the daily life of a Palestinian was disrupted, obstructed, or made more difficult by settlers, excluding cases involving direct physical violence. For example, we classify harassment as situations where a Palestinian shepherd is compelled to abandon grazing and leave the area due to the implicit threat posed by a settler's presence.



Figure 2 - Young Israeli settler armed with a baton



Figure 3 - Israeli army protecting settlers in Masafer Yatta

Damage to property or animals: All incidents involving the destruction or harm caused by Israeli settlers to Palestinian property or livestock — for instance, the theft or poisoning of animals, the uprooting or cutting of olive trees, the poisoning of wells, the destruction of water pipes and solar panels, the removal of protective fencing around agricultural land, and the vandalism of vehicles through slashed tires or broken windows. These acts also include damage to homes and other personal property.

Ten years of data were consolidated into a single spreadsheet and analysed using pivot tables in Excel. Visualisations were produced with Flourish. The process of consolidation required substantial data cleaning, as volunteers did not always follow the same conventions when entering information into the "serious log." For instance, in categories meant to be coded as binary values (1/0) to indicate whether a type of violence occurred, volunteers sometimes entered higher numbers representing the number of

Palestinians affected, or the number of repeated harassment events within a single incident. The person responsible for cleaning the dataset was a volunteer familiar with field documentation practices and the kinds of interpretive decisions volunteers make; this contextual knowledge was essential for harmonising inconsistencies. In all cases of ambiguity, the narrative description of the event was cross-checked to standardise the data and ensure internal coherence across the dataset. Additionally, at the end of each year, a protocol of verification and cross-checking of entries is conducted to maintain consistency and accuracy. A qualitative component was also included through selected excerpts from incident descriptions and photographs collected over the years, offering a more tangible sense of the dynamics observed in the field.

Finally, a word on the limitations of this report. The data presented here spans from 2010 to 2025 and pertains specifically to the Masafer Yatta area in the South Hebron Hills. It is important to note that this dataset has



Figure 4 - Israeli settler's sheep eating an olive tree while the Palestinian owner watches

inherent limitations in comprehensiveness and consistency. Because all events were recorded by Operazione Colomba volunteers, only incidents in which volunteers were physically present appear in the dataset. The years 2020–2021 saw additional gaps due to Covid-19 restrictions on international presence. Moreover, the number of volunteers fluctuated from two to ten at different points in time, meaning that volunteers could not always be present during episodes of settler harassment, aggression, or property damage. As such, the data reflects a partial view of what is likely a broader and ongoing pattern of systemic violence in the area. Although tracing the exact origin of each settler involved in violence is challenging—particularly on Saturdays, when settlers from other parts of the Occupied Territories are more likely to be present—this report proceeds under the assumption that perpetrators come primarily from the nearby settlements of Ma'on, Susyia, Avigayil, Carmel, and the outposts of Havat Ma'on and Mitzpe Yair, which aligns with the most common patterns observed on the ground.



Figure 5 - Israeli army and settler chasing a Palestinian away from his land

A DECADE OF VIOLENCE: ANALYZING TRENDS IN SETTLER ACTIONS

The first part of the analysis will focus on aggregated data, identifying patterns of violence in the decade 2010–2025. The second part will present the preliminary data from 2025 and analyse it in comparison to the previous decade, in order to assess whether the

trends emerging in 2023–2024 are continuing. The third part will focus on the settlers and the outcomes of their violence, both as it pertains to consequences for them and for the Palestinians.

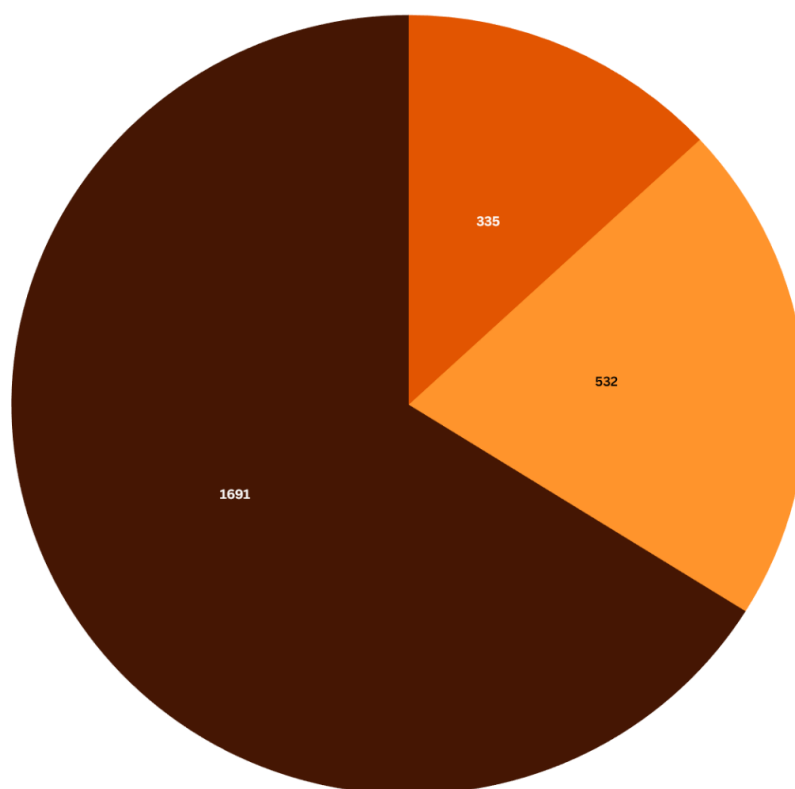
Data Analysis: Patterns of Violence

Main Takeaways:

- 2,558 settler violence cases recorded by Operazione Colomba in Masafer Yatta (2010-2025).
 - Harassment most frequent (1,691 cases), a near-daily disruption.
 - Annual averages: ~113 harassment, ~22 aggression, ~35 property damage incidents.
 - Frequent harassment suggests a deliberate tactic.
 - Marked increase in all violence types in 2023-2025, linked to COVID-19 aftermath, the genocide in Gaza and the installation of the most extremist government in Israel's history, in which two key ministerial appointments have normalized and advanced the national-religious settler ideology within the official state agenda, with settler-soldiers operating as a *de facto* militia.
-

Total Recorded Settler Violence by Type (2010-2025)

■ Harassment ■ Aggression ■ Damage to property or animals



Throughout the last decade, Operazione Colomba volunteers witnessed a total of **2,558 incidents of settler violence** in the Masafer Yatta area.

As illustrated in the chart, the most prevalent form of violence was **harassment**, with **1,691 recorded cases**, accounting for the clear majority of incidents. This pattern reflects the systematic and continuous nature of settler harassment as a tool of control, producing a near-constant disruption of Palestinian daily life.

In addition to harassment, volunteers documented **335 incidents of physical aggression**, involving overt acts of violence against Palestinians, and **532 incidents of damage to property or animals**, targeting livelihoods

through the destruction or theft of livestock, agricultural infrastructure, crop fields, fences, and olive groves. It is important to distinguish these acts from demolitions, which are typically carried out by Israeli state authorities—such as the District Coordination Office (DCO)—with the support of Israeli security forces, and therefore fall outside the scope of settler-initiated violence recorded here.

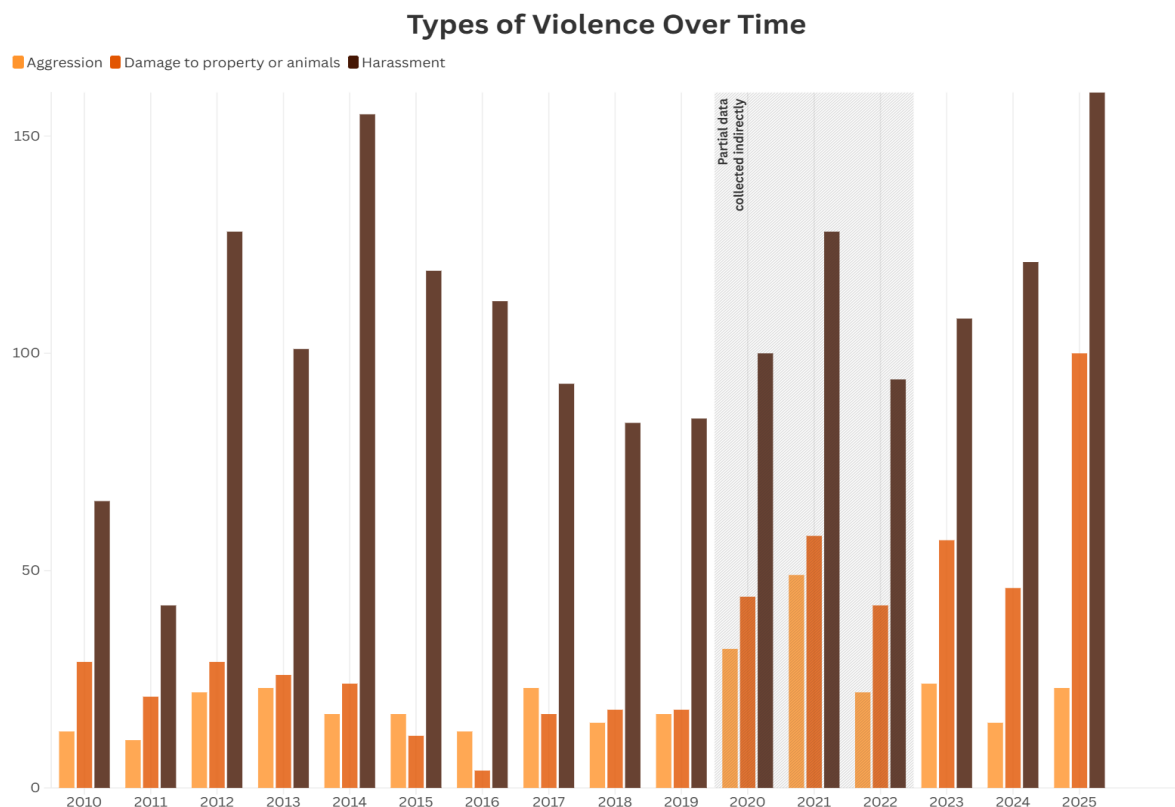
When disaggregated over time, the data indicates that, on average between 2010 and 2025, Palestinians in the area experienced approximately **113 cases of harassment**, **22 instances of physical aggression**, and **35 incidents of damage to property or animals per year**. Taken together, this amounts to an annual average of roughly **170 incidents of settler violence**. Put differently, this suggests

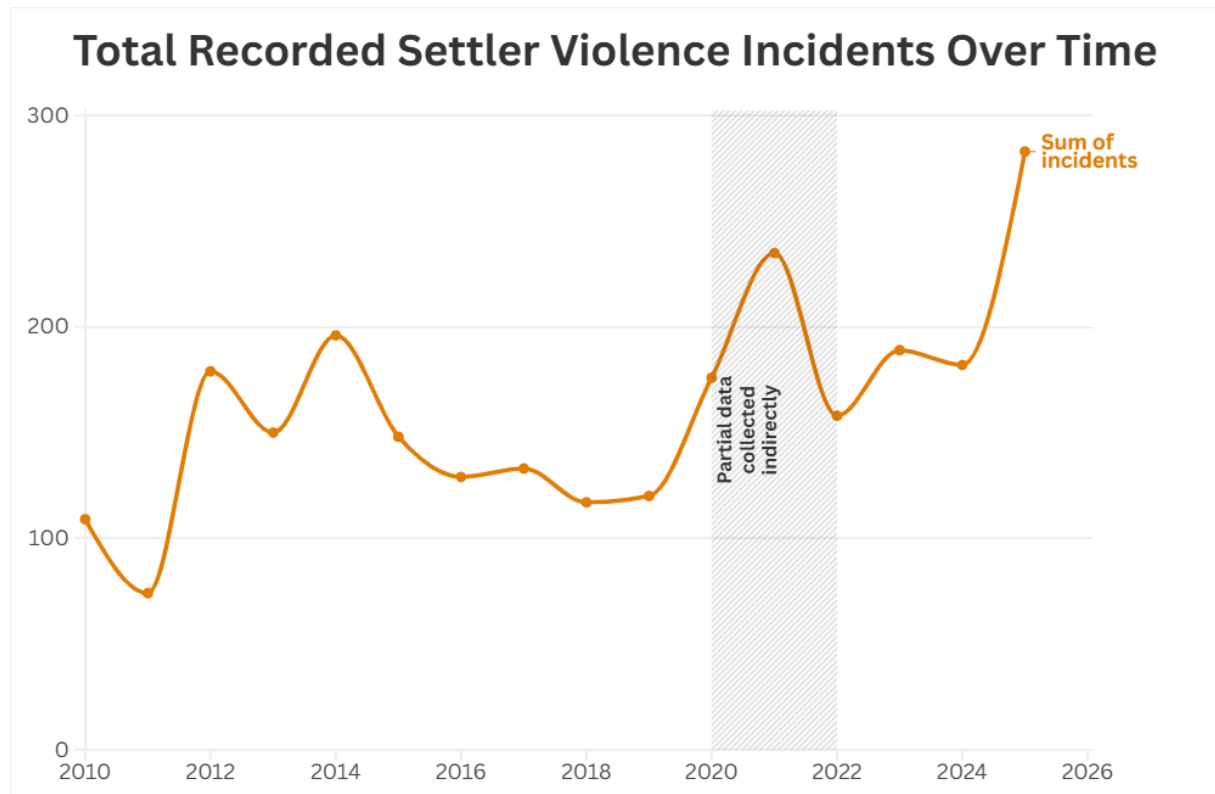
that a Palestinian resident of Masafer Yatta encounters some form of settler violence approximately **every two days**.

The temporal distribution of recorded settler violence between 2010 and 2025 reveals several critical insights. As the chart indicates, harassment consistently represents the most frequent type of recorded incident throughout the entire period, underscoring its central role in the disruption of Palestinian daily life in Masafer Yatta.

Importantly, the data for the years 2020–2022 must be interpreted with particular caution. As indicated in the chart, during this period Operazione Colomba volunteers were largely unable to access the field due to COVID-19 restrictions on international presence. Consequently, a significant portion of the incid-

ents recorded in these years was collected indirectly, through Palestinian communities and Israeli human rights defenders who shared the data they had documented. The figures for this period therefore do not represent a reduction in violence, nor are they directly comparable to other years in which data was gathered exclusively through Operazione Colomba's direct field presence. Rather, they reflect a different mode of documentation, necessitated by extraordinary circumstances, and should be understood as partial and methodologically distinct. Reports from Palestinian and Israeli activists during this same period indicate that settler violence likely intensified rather than diminished, particularly in the absence of international observers (Ziv, 2020).





From 2023 onward, the chart shows a clear and substantial increase across all three categories of violence, most notably in physical aggression and damage to property or animals. This escalation coincides with two major contextual factors:

- a) the long-term effects of COVID-19, which appear to have emboldened settler activity following a prolonged period of limited international monitoring;
- b) the aftermath of October 7th, 2023, which has accelerated an already ongoing policy of ethnic cleansing; and
- c) the establishment of a far-right governing coalition in Israel, with key ministries led by Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, whose public statements and policy initiatives have facilitated the incorporation of national-religious settler priorities into formal govern-

ment agendas, thereby normalising settler violence.

In this context, settlers have reportedly operated with near-total impunity, including documented instances of shooting at Palestinians (Beaumont, 2025), alongside an unprecedented rate of settlement expansion and outpost consolidation (European Union, Office of the European Union Representative [West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA] [EU Office], 2025).

Furthermore, the consistent high frequency of harassment incidents evident in the chart points to a deliberate pattern of action observed on the ground. Settlers' tactics often involve seemingly "minor" but persistent acts of violence aimed at preventing Palestinian access to their agrarian lands. This manifests as a daily routine where Palestinian shepherds are often unable to reach their grazing lands

due to the presence of Israeli settlers, frequently armed, with their own livestock. This repeated harassment, making the settlers' presence constantly felt, serves to intimidate Palestinians and can then escalate into the more severe acts of violence also captured in the chart.

The trend observed in the breakdown of violence types is mirrored in the total number of recorded settler violence incidents over time. While incidents fluctuate throughout the 2010s, a sustained surge begins around 2020, accelerates after 2022, and intensifies sharply from 2023 onward. This escalation coincides directly with the onset of the war on Gaza in October 2023 and the ensuing genocide. What has been witnessed on the ground, and is reflected in the data, is a growing sense of impunity among settlers, coupled with a ramping up of the state of Israel's ethnic cleansing policies.

Many adult settlers from the settlements of Ma'on, Susya, Avigayil, Carmel, and the outposts of Havat Ma'on and Mitzpe Yair enlisted



Figure 7 - Israeli settler soldiers

as reservists in the Israeli army. As regular soldiers were redeployed to Gaza, the West Bank — including the Masafer Yatta area — increasingly came under the control of a new configuration of armed settlers and auxiliary security forces, further entrenching violence, displacement, and coercion against Palestinian communities.

This force consisted of civilian settlers, provided with rifles and army status by the Minister of National Security Ben Gvir (Haaretz Editorial Board, 2025), essentially operating as an internal militia in the area. The surge in violence, particularly the increase in physical aggressions as seen in the previous chart, is to be understood within this context of settler-soldiers operating as a militia with heightened levels of authority and perceived impunity towards Palestinians. Our focus will now turn to the impact the settler action has had on Palestinians and we will see how this trend of impunity is far from being new.



Figure 6 - Israeli settler grazing with rifle

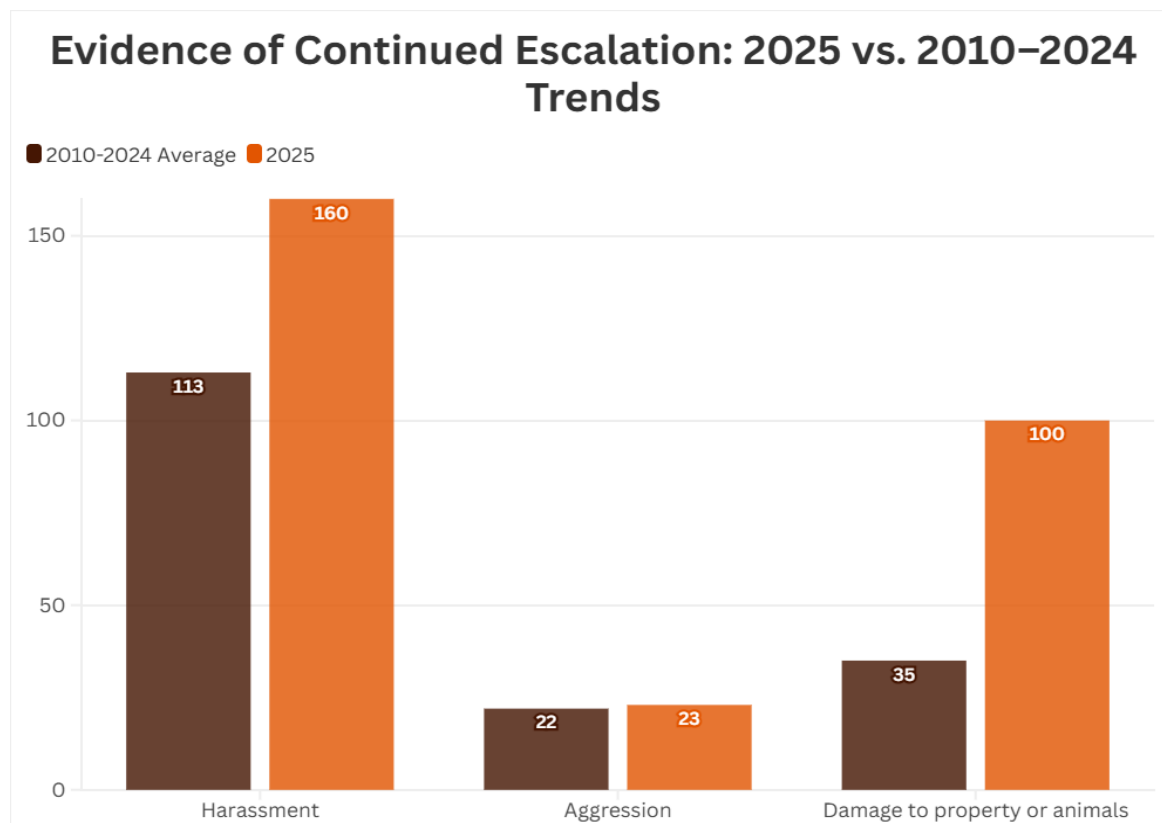
2025: A Snapshot In Comparative Perspective

Although this report focuses on the period 2010–2024, data from 2025 offers an important indication of how settler violence in Masafer Yatta is evolving in the aftermath of October 2023 and the continued militarization of Israeli settlers.

The comparative chart between the 2010–2024 averages and the 2025 figures shows a clear departure from longer-term patterns. Harassment incidents, which averaged 113 per year over the 15-year period, have reached 160 recorded cases in 2025. This exceeds not only the long-term average but also the full-year totals of many individual years prior to 2020. Physical aggression,

which averaged 22 incidents per year, has reached 23 cases in 2025, and damage to property or animals has risen from a historical average of 35 to 100 cases in 2025. Although these increases differ in scale, the overall pattern shows that all three categories are tracking above their long-term baselines.

At the same time, the category of “physical aggression” is likely misleading in both proportional and substantive terms, as it collapses very different forms of violence into a single count — ranging from acts such as stone throwing to far more severe physical assaults and killings. As a result, even where the number of recorded aggression incidents does not rise dramatically, the level of harm they represent may increase significantly. This is reflected in the nature of the violence documented in 2025, including the shooting of



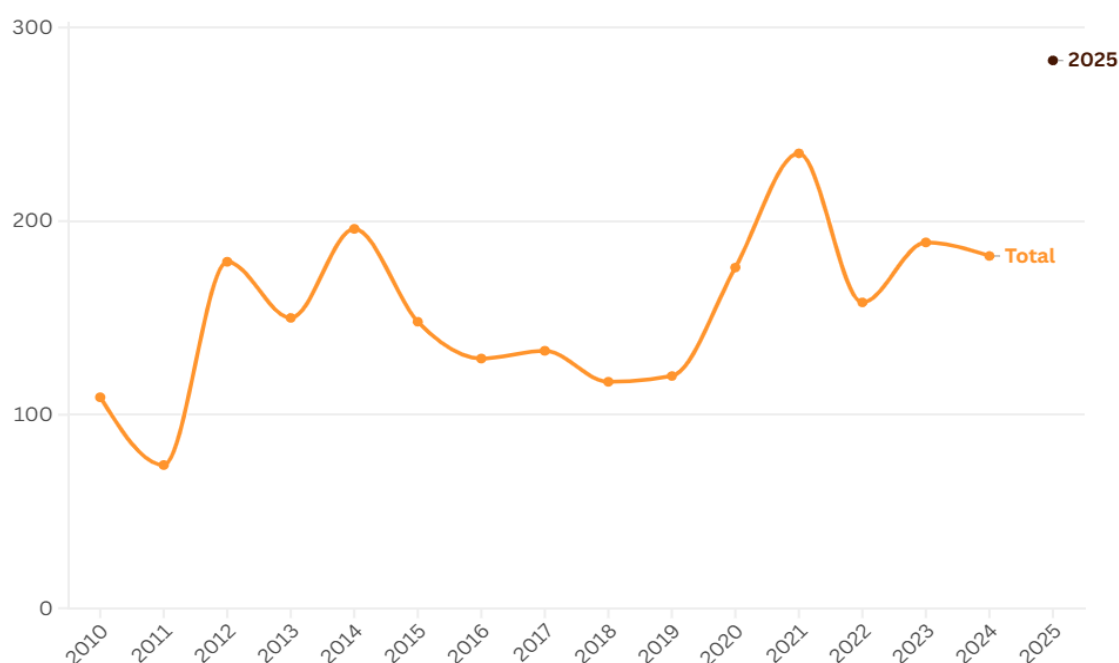
Sheikh Said al-Amoor, who lost his leg as a result of a settler attack (Operazione Colomba, 2025), and the killing of Awdah Hathaleen, who was shot by Israeli settler Yinon Levi in the village of Umm al-Khair (Shezaf, 2025). These cases indicate that while the frequency of “aggression” may appear relatively stable, its deadliness and severity have escalated markedly.

This pattern is also visible in the line chart of total incidents. The 2025 total sits alongside the exceptionally high figures recorded in 2023 and 2024, forming a three-year sequence of incident levels that is unmatched in the previous decade. Whereas earlier years fluctuated within a lower and relatively stable band, typically well below the 180–190 incident range (except for the year 2021 although it should be noted that again that data was not collected by volunteers from Operazione

Colomba but by Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders), the 2023–2025 period represents a clear break from that trajectory. Rather than a temporary spike, the 2025 data confirms that the escalation first observed after October 2023 has consolidated into a sustained pattern, marking a shift in both the scale and consistency of settler violence compared to the earlier years in the dataset.

A further element of continuity with previous years is the near-absence of consequences for settlers. In the 2025 data, there are only four recorded cases in which settlers faced any form of consequence, all of them in harassment incidents. In these cases, the institutional presence varied: two incidents involved the police, one involved the army, and in one case the army was not present at all. These isolated outcomes mirror the broader patterns documented in the 2010-2024 dataset,

Total Recorded Settler Violence Incidents Over Time (2010–2025)



where accountability remains rare and inconsistent, regardless of whether Israeli authorities are present during the incident. The implications of this persistent lack of accountability, and the ways in which it reinforces broader structures of violence, will be examined in greater detail in a dedicated section below.

Taken together, these figures indicate that the broader dynamics identified throughout this report remain fully operative in 2025: the consolidation of settler-soldiers, the expansion of armed civilian groups functioning as de facto militias, and the persistent absence of legal consequences for settlers. These elements are not incidental but reflect the policy environment in which they occur. The combination of militarized settlement, coordinated settler-state action, and systematic non-accountability aligns with long-standing practices aimed at displacing Palestinians from targeted areas and entrenching a regime of segregation and unequal rights. In this context, the heightened levels of harassment, aggression, and property damage observed in 2025 are not only symptoms of individual actors but concrete outcomes of a broader political framework consistent with policies of ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

Focus: The Settlers

As it was explored in the introduction, there are different types of settlers, though the underlying settler ideology of colonialism and

ethnic cleansing remains unvaried across all types. To understand the nature of the violence documented, it is crucial to define the settlers in the Masafer Yatta area. These are primarily ideological extremists who believe in the establishment of a Judeo-nation encompassing all of historical Palestine and beyond ("Greater Israel," n.d.), accessible exclusively to Jewish people.



Figure 8 - Israeli settler preparing for an attack

From Operazione Colomba's data log

"On December 31st, 2014, Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian house in the South Hebron Hills. Two settlers wrote 'revenge of the Jewish kingdom' in black spray paint near the front door, then broke a window and threw a Molotov cocktail inside. The explosion damaged furniture and a television, but the family, asleep in another room, was unharmed."

This foundational belief drives the creation and ongoing expansion of settlements like Ma'on, Susya, Avigayil, Carmel, and the outposts of Havat Ma'on, Mitzpe Yair, and Mitzpe Eshtamoa. For these settlers, the struggle to settle and control the land is paramount, as land control dictates resource access and, critically, who is permitted to inhabit it.

From Operazione Colomba's data log

"On February 9th, 2014, during a peaceful action asserting the right of Palestinians to access their land, a group of settlers from the illegal outpost of Mitzpe Eshtamoa attacked Palestinian farmers, Israeli activists, and international volunteers with stones and sticks. Israeli soldiers present at the scene did not intervene. The group, consisting of about fifteen Palestinians from Shuweika, along with Israeli and international supporters, entered the valley near Mitzpe Eshtamoa with their flocks to reach their fields. Upon arrival, they found a Star of David made of stones placed on Palestinian land, which they peacefully removed.

Shortly after, around twenty settlers, some masked, came down from the outpost and began throwing stones with slingshots. They also assaulted an Israeli activist, while soldiers stood by. Later, settlers continued throwing stones from a nearby hill. Only then did soldiers attempt, unsuccessfully, to stop them. The Palestinian landowner ar-

rived to show proof of ownership, but was also targeted with stones. No settlers were detained or arrested, even after the police arrived."

Typically, the settlers in these aforementioned settlements are Israeli citizens, often holding dual nationality or originating from countries such as the USA, Russia, and South Africa, and are predominantly Ashkenazi. While adults are frequently the perpetrators of the most severe attacks, settlers under the age of 18 are also implicated in the violence.



Figure 9 Israeli settler soldiers

As previously discussed, the profile of these settlers has evolved with the onset of the war on Gaza, leading to a surge of settlers being armed and joining the military as reserves. This is hardly news, as the settlers have historically been heavily harmed, citing self-defense (Amnesty International, 2002). Armed settlers include private handgun owners, members of settlement security squads, and

settler soldiers in both local defense and the regular army (Mehvar & Khmour, 2024). In addition to armed settlers acting individually, a rise in violence from armed settlers frequently seen in military attire has been reported since October 7th, 2023. These settlement emergency teams (*kitat konenut*, in Hebrew) (Ambri, 2023), which are essentially quasi-military forces of trained and IDF-equipped settlement residents, are distinct from those acting on their own, as they are organized and appointed by the settlements (Yesh Din, 2014). Besides these new, heavily armed, evolutions of settler presence, reported below are the data collected in the last 15 years of settlers' violence in Masafer Yatta and the insights we can gather from it.

The scatter plot illustrating the demographics of settlers involved in violence incidents reveals that the majority of these events involve relatively small groups of both adult and child settlers, with a concentration of events in-

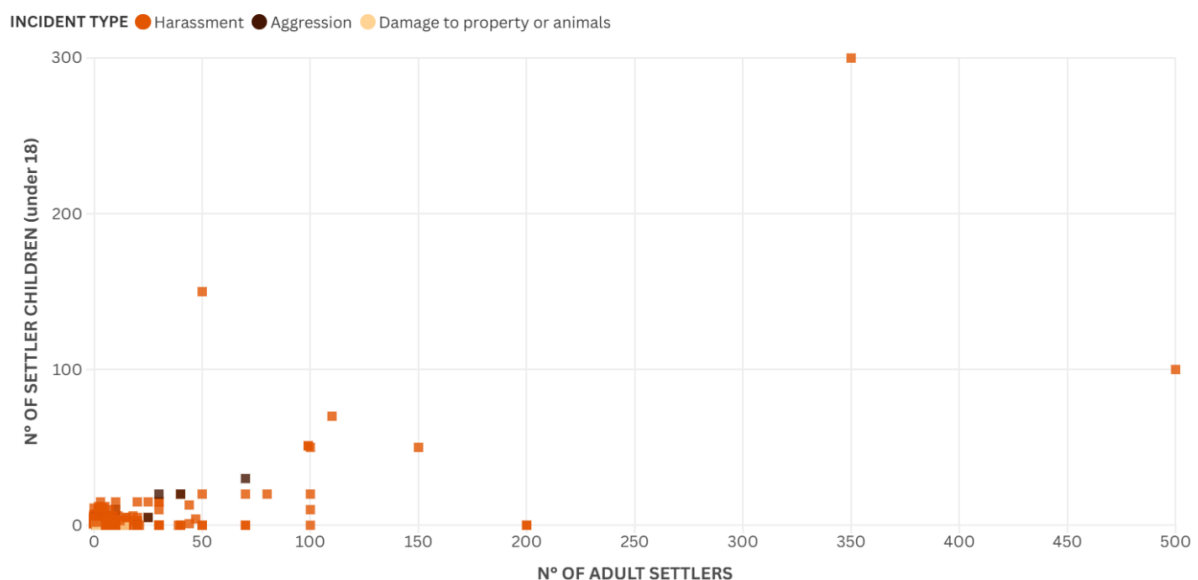
volving between 1 and 20 settlers. However, the presence of outliers indicates instances, particularly within harassment and property damage, where a significant number of adult settlers participate, sometimes with minimal or no child involvement. These outliers involving a large number of settlers are often cases where the settlers organized an event of great impact, either on Palestinian land or on Palestinian daily activities.

From Operazione Colomba's data log, large-scale harassments

"On December 6th, 2012, settlers organized a Marathon along the Bypass road 317, causing the closure of the main road connecting Tuwani to the city of Al-Birke."

"On April 7th, 2015, around 13:30, a large group of settlers gathered with vehicles at the entrance to At Tuwani. By 14:00, when three OD volunteers arrived, the settlers

Settlers Demographic in Violence Incidents



were blocking the road, preventing Palestinian movement. When the settlers reached Al Birkeh (ed. Area A), Israeli soldiers declared the village pool a "closed military area" and removed all Palestinians, allowing settlers to enter. At about 18:15, settlers, the army, and police left. OD volunteers counted over 150 settler cars, nine army jeeps, four armored vehicles, and one police car. Palestinians were denied road access for about four hours."

Notably, settler children (under 18) are implicated across all recorded types of violence – harassment, aggression, and damage to property – though typically in smaller numbers than their adult counterparts within the same incident.

From Operazione Colomba's data log, violence involving settlers' minors

"On the night of October 14, 2017, around 11 p.m., about 50 Israeli settlers—including 20 minors—from the Havat Ma'on outpost attempted to enter the Palestinian village of At-Tuwani. When residents came out, settlers threw rocks and chanted. Israeli soldiers arrived about 30 minutes later, firing flash grenades, sound bombs, and tear gas between homes to disperse Palestinians and facilitate the settlers' entry. Some residents were injured, and tear gas entered homes where women and children were sheltering. After nearly two hours, set-

tlers and soldiers left. The next day, villagers found a damaged greenhouse on the east side of At-Tuwani: its plastic cover torn by stones and part of it burned by a gas canister."

The lack of a clear linear relationship between the number of adult and child settlers suggests varied dynamics at play during these incidents. The clustering of points for different violence types might further hint at distinct patterns of participation depending on whether the act is harassment, aggression, or damage to property. The data seems to suggest that minors take part in violent aggression only when a large number of adults is also present, whereas one would find Israeli settler minors being involved, in smaller numbers, in everyday harassment cases, especially involving shepherding.

From Operazione Colomba's data log, harassment involving settler minors

"On the 13th of April, 2012, six teenage settlers from the Havat Ma'on outpost approached Meshaha Hill, where a Palestinian woman, two children, and an international volunteer were collecting herbs. One of the young settlers swung a slingshot as they advanced, causing the group to flee into the valley. The teenagers chased them and damaged six olive trees belonging to an At-Tuwani resident—an important source of livelihood for the village."



Figure 10 Israeli settler minor grazing sheep

Overall, the data underscores that settler violence is not solely an adult phenomenon. In fact, what has been observed on the ground is that in the last couple of years, the presence of underage settlers has increased. Minors are often the ones being sent shepherding, they are often armed, and usually are the ones who end up harassing the Palestinians. This seems to be a deliberate tactic because minors face more lenient consequences, if at all, in the Israeli judicial system. The legal system in Israel is two-pronged: the military system under which Palestinians are tried and a non-military one for Israeli citizens (Viterbo, 2021); even in those cases where the Israeli citizen is a former member of the military, or a settler occupying illegally Palestinian land, they will still be tried by a civil court. In fact, courts often consider a settler's previous service in the military as a mitigating factor (ibid). Minor settlers – those under the age of 18 – constitute 8.9% of those arrested by the Israeli police and 7.4% convicted by a non-military court (Israel Police – Planning and Organiza-

tion Division, 2018; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Under the Israeli Youth Law, which regulates Israeli citizens under the age of 18 in conflict with criminal law, certain provisions are guaranteed. Succinctly, these are some of the provisions:

1. **Detention as a Last Resort:** Detention for individuals under 18 should only be used when absolutely necessary.
2. **Protection of Dignity and Age Consideration:** All actions involving under-18s must respect their dignity, taking into account their age and maturity.
3. **Focus on Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** Measures should prioritize rehabilitation, care, and reintegration into society.
4. **Respect for Their Wishes:** Decisions affecting under-18s must consider their preferences and input.
5. **Age Consideration in Arrest Decisions:** Police must factor in the child's age and how arrest might impact their well-being and development.
6. **Right to Express Opinions:** Under-18s should be allowed to voice their opinions throughout the criminal justice process.
7. **Age-Appropriate Explanations:** Courts must explain decisions to under-18s in ways that suit their age and maturity, especially when decisions go against their wishes. (Viterbo, 2021)

As Viterbo pointedly notes: "None of these provisions exist in the Israeli military law to which noncitizen Palestinians are subject" (ibid, p.308). Moreover, Palestinian minors

going through the military courts have a 94% conviction rate, whereas their Israeli counterpart have 40%, with only 20% actually finishing their sentence (Yehuda et al., 2014). This is an important aspect to underline because it puts into perspective the data collected about the average number of Palestinian minors suffering from settlers' harassment or aggression.

The data collected in 15 years of monitoring reveal a clear trend: settler violence affects both Palestinian adults and children, but the nature and extent of the impact differ slightly between the age groups and the type of violence. When it comes to **aggression by settlers**, adult Palestinians are, on average, more frequently victims (8.4 individuals) than children (7.5 individuals). This suggests that aggressive acts may be targeted towards adults. Conversely, **harassment by settlers** appears

to impact children more significantly, with an average of 4.4 Palestinian children involved compared to 3.7 adults. This data is consistent with what was exposed before, since harassment cases do not involve physical violence, but rather intimidation tactics and other forms of violence. The fact remains that Palestinian minors are not exempt from Israeli settlers' violence; they are only marginally less at the immediate brunt of physical violence.

From Operazione Colomba's data log

"On August 6, 2021, a Palestinian shepherd and his family were grazing on their own land in the village of Susyia when a group of settlers from the Israeli settlement of Susyia started throwing stones at them from the top of the hill. After a while, the settlers

Avg. Palestinian Victims of Settler Violence

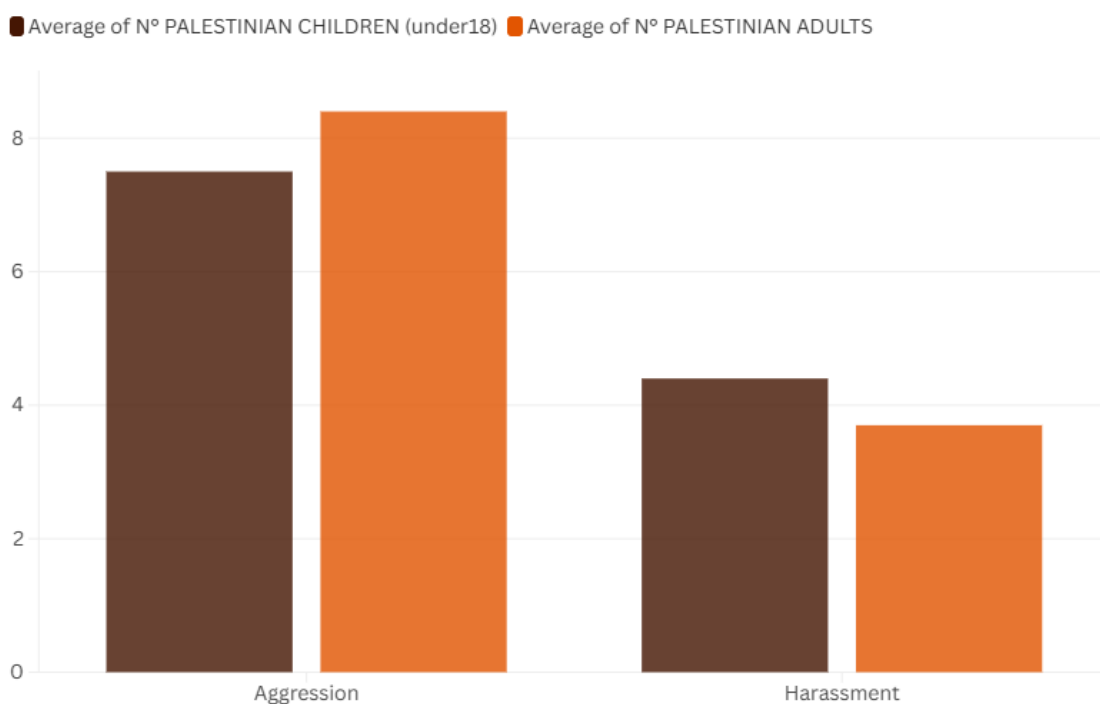




Figure 11 Israeli settler soldiers blindfolding and handcuffing a Palestinian

came down from the hill and began chasing the sheep and children with drones. When the Palestinian shepherd tried to talk with the settlers, they sprayed a toxic gas in his face."

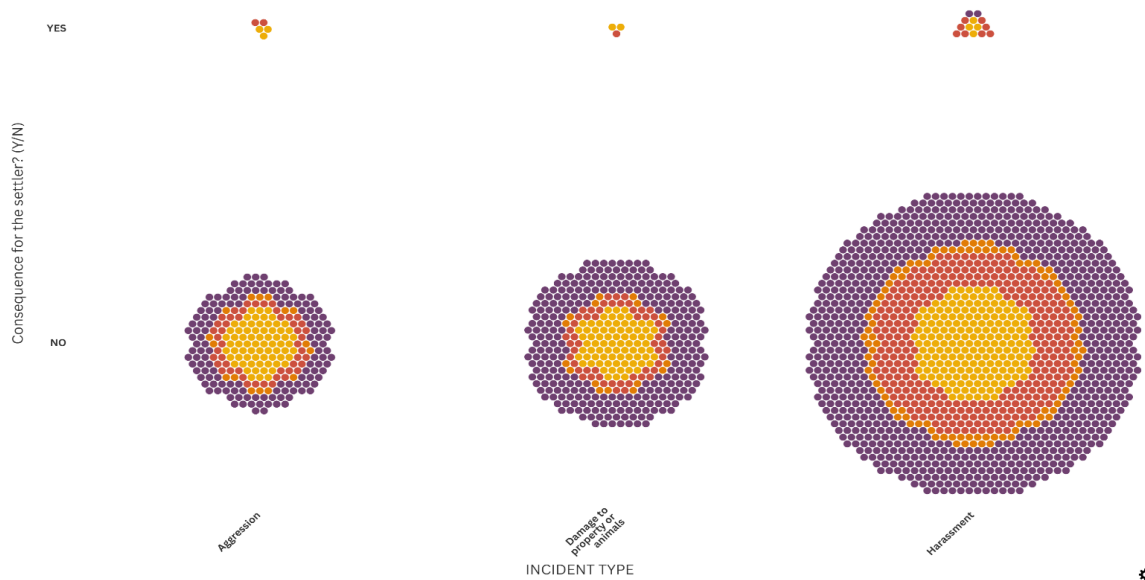
Structural Impunity and Settler Violence

As it may be visible from the data analyzed, the incidents reported, and the literature provided, settlers do not act alone. There is a military and judicial system that enables, and in many cases supports their behavior, which can be defined as a system of occupation and apartheid. In this last section, we will focus on the role the Israeli army and Israeli police play in the recorded instances of settler violence. As was explored above, Palestinians are un-

der martial law, hence, the military is often the body that responds first in cases of attacks or harassment. In the majority of the cases, because they were already present at the time of the violent incident or called upon by the settlers. In the case of a land dispute, the Israeli police is the one called upon by Palestinians. What was observed in the last couple of years by volunteers is that when the police are called by Palestinians, in the cases where it does show up, it often asks the plaintiff to go to the police station to file a complaint - which requires enormous disposal of time and resources, often to no avail – while the settler is allowed to keep trespassing.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SETTLERS 2010-2025

Army Present During or After (D/A) ■ After ■ During ■ During/After ■ No



The chart displays all the recorded incidents of settler violence over the last ten years (aggression, damage to property or animals, harassment), with each incident shaded to indicate whether the Israeli army was present After (A), During (D), During/After (D/A), or Not present (No). The vertical axis (Y-axis) indicates whether there were any consequences for the settlers involved (Yes/No). As clearly evident, the sheer volume of incidents where there were no consequences for the settlers overwhelmingly outweighs the instances where there were consequences, across all three types of incidents. Furthermore, the limited number of cases where consequences were reported ("Yes" on the Y-axis) appears to have some correlation with the army being present During or During/After the incident. Conversely, the much larger number of incidents with no con-

sequences ("No" on the Y-axis) include instances with all types of army presence (After, During, During/After, and No presence), suggesting that a lack of accountability is common regardless of the army's involvement. It should be noted that even in the cases where some sort of consequence was reported, it does not always mean that a) it is resolute, nor that b) it protects Palestinians' rights, nor that c) it is adequate or proportionate: for example, the settler Yinon Levy, who killed Awdah Hathaleen on 28 July 2025, received only two days of house arrest as a sentence.

From Operazione Colomba's data log

"On February 25th, 2024, an Israeli settler went to Khelly Hill, on Palestinian private land in the village of At-Tuwani, to graze his flock. The Palestinian owner of the land and his son went

there to check. Two Israeli soldiers, three Israeli activists, and two Operazione Colomba volunteers went as well. The Israeli soldiers sent away all the people, presumably also the Israeli settlers, because they declared that the area was a closed military area.”

Similar trends and outcomes can be seen when the police are involved.

Similar to the previous chart, the overwhelming majority of incidents across all types (aggression, damage to property/animals, harassment) resulted in **no consequences** for the settlers. As can be seen, the police are mostly not present during or after a settler’s violence. However, when consequences were recorded, they appear to have some association with the police being present “During” the incident.

Comparing this to the chart on army presence, both datasets reveal a similar primary trend: a general lack of consequences for settlers.

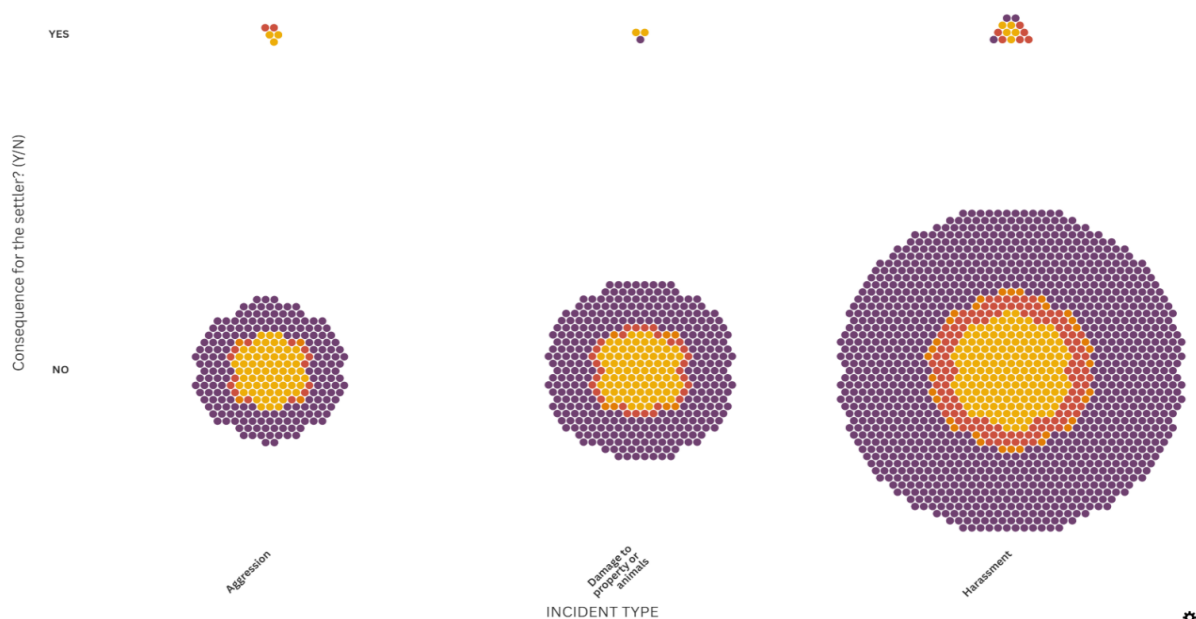
Again, even in those cases where some sort of consequence was recorded, the dynamics and impact on Palestinians are more nuanced than what can be captured in the chart.

From Operazione Colomba’s data log

“On March 16th, 2023, during the Jewish holiday of Purim, Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians and internationals on Palestinian fields near the illegal outpost of Mitzpe Yair. In the morning, four Palestinian shepherds from the village of Qawawis were grazing their flocks south of the Israeli out-

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SETTLERS 2010-2025

Police Present During or After (D/A) ■ After ■ During ■ During/After ■ No



post when a settler arrived, armed with an iron pipe, and began shouting threats.

Soon after, two internationals arrived with two more Palestinian shepherds. The armed settler left the scene upon realizing he was being filmed. Shortly afterward, eight settlers arrived from the illegal outpost—one still armed with the iron pipe—and four of them violently chased the flocks, driving them toward the valley below the outpost. The Palestinian shepherds, accompanied by internationals, followed to protect their animals. The Palestinians immediately contacted the Israeli police.

As the settlers returned to the outpost, additional internationals and two Palestinian members of the South Hebron Hills Popular Committee arrived. One settler attempted to chase away one of the newly arrived Palestinians, a member of the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem. At that moment, an Israeli policeman and three soldiers arrived on foot.

As the policeman began questioning those present, three more settlers appeared. The individuals interrogated included a Palestinian shepherd who had documented the incident with a B'Tselem camera, and one international. Both were taken to the Kiryat Arba police station to provide testimony about the harassment.

The international was asked to hand over the camera footage, interrogated, and released later that afternoon. **The Palestinian**

shepherd was interrogated alone for several hours and was threatened with arrest unless he agreed to sign a document stating that he would not approach within 450 meters of the area where the harassment took place for 15 days. He was released later in the evening after signing the document. **The settler** who had threatened Palestinians with an iron pipe **was ordered by Israeli police to stay at least 200 meters away** from the location of the incident for a period of 15 days.”

CONCLUSION

The data analysed in this report, fifteen years of documented settler violence in the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta, reconstructs a clear and distressingly consistent pattern: the daily lives of Palestinians in the South Hebron Hills are systematically shaped by a settler-colonial apparatus designed to dispossess, displace, and ultimately remove them from their land. Despite the geographical specificity of this dataset and its inevitable limitations, the picture that emerges is neither anecdotal nor isolated. Rather, it reveals the operation of a coherent political project, implemented through the coordinated actions of Israeli settlers, the Israeli army, and the Israeli police, underpinned by legal, infrastructural, and ideological systems that together constitute an apparatus of ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

Across the span of 2010–2025, harassment appears as the most common form of settler violence, with 1,691 incidents, reflecting an everyday, near-constant attempt to restrict Palestinian access to land, movement, stability, and livelihood. The additional 335 cases of physical aggression and 532 attacks on property or livestock underscore that this violence is not merely symbolic or intimidatory but frequently escalates into bodily harm and material destruction. The temporal analysis confirms that settler violence is sensitive to political shifts. The marked escalation

after 2022, magnified following October 7th, 2023, further affirms that this violence is not an unfortunate by-product of the war on Gaza but part of a broader, accelerating strategy of territorial expansion across the West Bank. The rise of settler-soldiers, civilians armed, legitimised, and deployed as local militias, has dramatically increased the degree of impunity settlers enjoy. Their presence reconfigures the terrain of violence: settlers no longer act merely with state backing but often as the state itself. This dynamic is reflected in the sharp increase in physical aggressions and property destruction in this period, and in the near-total absence of consequences across all incidents documented.

The demographic analysis reveals additional layers of intentionality. The participation of settler minors, often armed, often those initiating harassment, points to a deliberate generational transmission of settler-colonial ideology. The experiences of Palestinians, adults and children alike, demonstrate that settler violence is designed not only to intimidate but to erode the foundations of community life: shepherding routes, agricultural cycles, access to pastures, the ability to walk safely between villages, the stability of family livelihoods, free and secure access to education, and the psychological security of children growing up under constant threat. The

attacks on crops, wells, water infrastructures, homes, and schools document not only interpersonal violence but *domicide*, *ecocide*, *scholasticide* and the deliberate dismantling of the material conditions necessary for Palestinian social and economic life.

When viewed through the frameworks outlined in the premise — *genocide*, *urbicide*, *domicide*, *politicide*, *scholasticide*, *ecocide* — the data from Masafer Yatta fits squarely within the broader structural logic of settler colonialism as defined by Pappé and others: the drive not only to control land but to remove the Indigenous population from it. The settlers documented here are not marginal extremists but active agents in a state-supported project of territorial seizure. Their actions are enabled by military structures, protected by legal mechanisms, and embedded in political decisions that have accelerated dramatically since October 2023.

This report therefore stands not only as a documentation of specific events, but as evidence of a broader system of domination in which civilian settlers and military forces operate as complementary pillars of a single project. It affirms what Palestinians in Masafer Yatta have long asserted: that their daily struggle is not merely against individual settlers but against an entire political system built on their removal. The hope is that by making this violence visible, grounded in concrete data and lived experience, the mechanisms of dispossession can no longer be dismissed as isolated or exceptional but

recognized for what they are: the ongoing implementation of a settler-colonial project whose aim is the elimination of Palestinian life from the land.

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