

Humanitarian Bulletin

occupied Palestinian territory

DECEMBER 2016



HIGHLIGHTS

- During 2016 olive harvest season, Israeli settlers vandalized 210 olive trees down from 801 during the 2015 season.
- Revenues from the export/transfer of produce out of Gaza in 2016 increased by 80 per cent compared to 2015, half of those recorded in 2007, when the blockade was imposed.
- About 70 per cent of the requested \$ 547 million in donor funding for the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan launched in December target Gaza.
- The de facto expansion of Talmon-Nahliel settlement bloc has undermined the livelihoods of six nearby Palestinian villages.



© FAO/Masoud Keshta

A farmer tends his hanging strawberries in Beit Lahiya, Gaza Strip.

In this issue

- The 2016 olive harvest: access challenges remain despite increase in permit approvals and reduced settler violence 2
- Significant increase in agricultural exports/transfers from Gaza during 2016 7
- \$547 million funding appeal to address humanitarian needs in Palestine during 2017 9
- The humanitarian impact of de facto settlement expansion: the case of Talmon-Nahliel bloc..... 11

Overview

On 19 December, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) was publicly launched. The plan seeks US \$547 million in donor funding to support the humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians whose livelihoods and rights have been undermined by almost 50 years of Israeli military occupation, compounded by recurrent escalations in violence, a ten year-long blockade on the Gaza Strip, and internal Palestinian divisions.

Over half of the requested funding (US\$ 300 million) are aimed at addressing food insecurity among more than 1.6 million Palestinians, who are not consuming enough nutritious and varied food. This is primarily related to the erosion of livelihoods by longstanding access restrictions and the destruction of productive assets, which have undermined income and led to high unemployment rates (over 43 per cent in Gaza and nearly 20 per cent in the West Bank).

This Humanitarian Bulletin highlights two major events related to the agricultural livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinian families: the yearly olive harvest, which takes place mainly in the West Bank and has recently ended, and the main marketing season for Gaza agricultural produce, which has just started.

While a poor yield is expected for this season (related to the natural cycle), olive harvest activities have proceeded relatively smoothly. Disruptions due to Israeli settler attacks, including the number of trees vandalized, significantly declined compared to previous years, partly due to the enhanced deployment of Israeli military forces in sensitive areas. Additionally, the rate of approval of permit applications to access olive groves in the closed areas behind the Barrier has increased. However, Palestinian access to these areas, as well as to groves within or near Israeli settlements, has remained limited to the harvest and ploughing seasons, impeding essential year-round agricultural activities. Data collected by OCHA over the last three years in the northern West Bank show that olive trees in the area behind the Barrier have an approximately 65 per cent reduction in yield compared to their equivalents in areas which can be accessed year-round.

In Gaza, the main season for the export and transfer of agricultural produce has recently started. The overall revenues from the marketing of produce outside Gaza in 2016 (as of 8 December) was 80 per cent higher than in 2015, primarily due to the easing of Israeli restrictions, and is expected to further increase

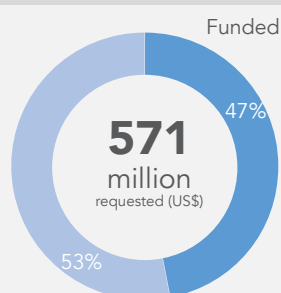
DECEMBER FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	5
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	105
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	18
Structures demolished in the West Bank	38
People displaced in the West Bank	22

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2016

571 million
requested (US\$)

47% funded



Unmet requirement



in 2017. However, these revenues remain significantly below those recorded prior to the imposition of the blockade in 2007. An additional easing of access restrictions could provide much needed relief from unemployment and food insecurity, pending a full lifting of the blockade. These could include the removal of quotas and restrictions on produce allowed to reach Israeli markets; reversing restrictions on the import of agricultural inputs classified by Israel as 'dual-use' items; and allowing access to the farmland in restricted areas along Gaza's perimeter fence.

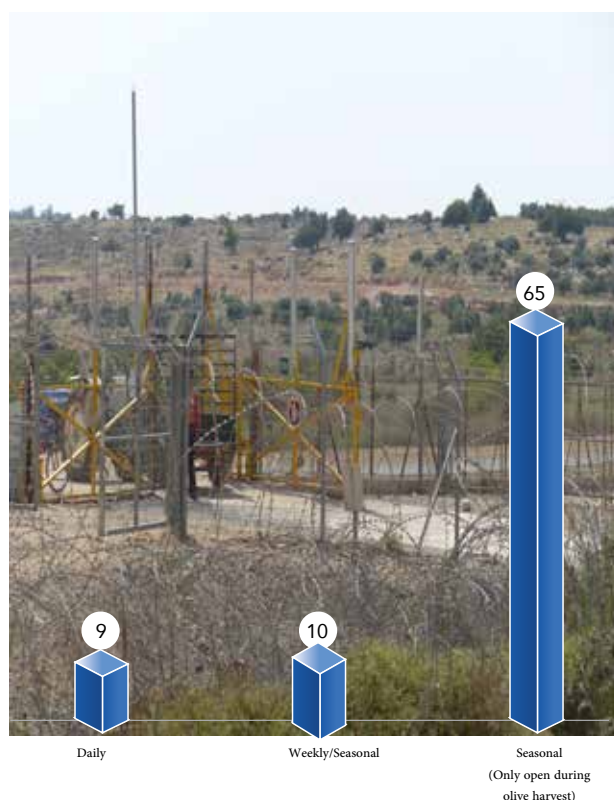
On 23 December 2016, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution reaffirming the illegality of Israeli settlements, and demanding that Israel cease all settlement activities. The resolution also condemned all acts of violence against civilians, as well as incitement and destruction. This month's Bulletin presents the second in a series of articles on the de facto expansion of settlements and its humanitarian impact on Palestinian communities, featuring the settlements Talmon and Nahliel in the Ramallah governorate. The area controlled by these settlement, where Palestinian access is severely restricted or impossible, is almost 2.5 times larger than the official Israeli-designated municipal boundaries. Within these de facto boundaries, settlers have developed, without permits but with the acquiescence of the Israeli authorities, various residential, farming and touristic areas, linked by an extensive road network. The official and de facto expansion of Talmon and Nahliel has severely impacted the livelihoods of farmers and herders from six nearby villages.

On 23 December 2016, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution reaffirming the illegality of Israeli settlements, demanding a cease of all settlement activities and condemning violence against civilians and incitement

The 2016 olive harvest: access challenges remain despite increase in permit approvals and reduced settler violence

The 2016 olive harvest season, which lasted from 15 October to the end of November, was reported to have proceeded relatively smoothly. However, sporadic incidents of settler violence and restrictions on access to olive groves behind the Barrier and near Israeli settlements continue to pose challenges for Palestinian farmers.

The annual olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event for Palestinians. Approximately 183,000 hectares of land are cultivated for agriculture, nearly half of it for olive trees. Olive and olive oil production is concentrated in the north and northwest of the West Bank. Between 80,000 and 100,000 families are said to rely on olives and olive oil for primary or secondary sources of income, and the sector employs large numbers of unskilled labourers and ap-



proximately 15 per cent of working women. The entire olive sub-sector, including olive oil, table olives, pickles and soap, is worth between US\$160 and \$191 million in good years.¹ This year's yield was poor and is projected to be 16,000-18,000 MT (metric tons) of oil, down from 21,000 MT in 2015 and 24,000 MT in 2014.

Decline in settler violence

Olive-based livelihoods in many areas of the West Bank are undermined by Israeli settlers uprooting and vandalizing olive trees, and by intimidation and the physical assault of farmers during the harvest season. Such incidents have declined in recent years, partly due to the enhanced deployment of Israeli military forces in sensitive areas around Israeli settlements. Nonetheless, a protective presence is still provided in some cases under the coordination of the Protection Cluster (see box below).

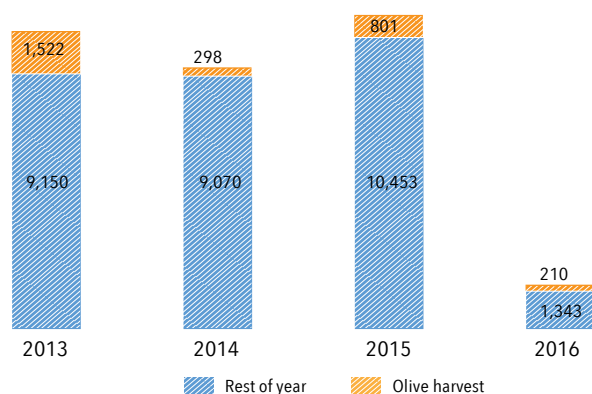
Preventive measures by international humanitarian organizations

For the fifth year in a row, the Protection Cluster, via the Core Group on Settler Violence chaired by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, coordinated the deployment of a protective presence to support Palestinian farmers and their families during the olive harvest. This year, 59 areas of friction were identified throughout the West Bank where settler violence has been recurrent. With the participation of 14 organizations, the Core Group on Settler Violence coordinated the monitoring and documentation of settler violence, developed and provided information and monitoring tools for volunteers, and ensured the referral of cases for protection (including legal and psycho-social) responses.

This olive season (October and November), OCHA recorded a total of 26 olive harvest-related incidents of settler violence resulting in property damage or injuries, down from 33 in 2015 and 29 in 2014. Some fifty per cent (13) of the incidents involved the vandalism of 210 olive trees (only during the olive harvest season). As in previous years, the majority of trees vandalized during 2016 were targeted outside of the olive harvest season when fewer Israeli forces are present. As illustrated in the chart, there was a major decline in the overall number of trees affected in 2016.

In 2016 harvest, 210 olive trees were vandalized by settlers, compared to 801 in 2015.

Palestinian trees vandalized during olive harvest season and rest of the year (2013 - Nov.2016)



The Prior Coordination System

The presence of settlements restricts access to Palestinian land for cultivation purposes. Approximately 90 Palestinian communities own land within, or in the vicinity of, 56 Israeli settlements and settlement outposts. Farmers can only access their land through prior coordination with the Israeli authorities. Access is generally only permitted for a limited number of days during the harvest and ploughing seasons. This system was in force during this year's olive harvest but, as in previous years, many Palestinian farmers complained that the period of time allocated was insufficient. In at least four cases this year, Israeli forces denied farmers access to their groves or prevented them from completing the harvesting of their olives. This resulted in farmers losing time from the already restricted schedule allocated.

In the Ramallah area, there were also reports that the Israeli army did not attend at the designated time and farmers felt insecure and vulnerable to attacks by settlers. In October, when farmers from Al Jaba'a and Beit Ummar accessed their 1,000 trees located within the Bat Ayin settlement security fence, they discovered that the majority of the trees had already been harvested.

In northern West Bank about 41 per cent of permit applications to access land between the Barrier and the Green Line were rejected.

Accountability for settler violence

The prevalence of Israeli settler violence, particularly the vandalism of olive trees, is closely linked to inadequate law enforcement by the Israeli authorities. During the 2013-2015 olive harvests, the Israeli organization Yesh Din documented a total of 53 harvest-related offenses: 10 related to crop theft, 25 to vandalism of trees and 18 to harvest disruption. Of these, 26 complaints were filed with the Israeli police, but only one resulted in an indictment. In 18 cases, the investigation was closed without an indictment, the majority (15) on the grounds of "offender unknown".²

Increase in permits to access land behind the Barrier

The Barrier, the major obstacle to Palestinian movement within the West Bank, has a direct impact on olive-related livelihoods. Palestinian farmers need special permits or prior coordination to access farming land designated as a 'closed area' between the Barrier and the Green Line. If granted approval, farmers have to cross designated Barrier gates and checkpoints.

Most of the crossings along the Barrier are only open during the olive harvest period and only for a limited amount of time on those days, prohibiting year-round access. During this year's olive harvest, 84 gates³ were designated for agricultural access, of which only nine open daily, 10 open for some day(s) of the week and during the olive season; and the majority, 65, only open during the olive season. Of the 84 gates, 63 require access permits and 21 operate through prior coordination.

In the northern West Bank (Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliya and Salfit governorates) where the majority of Barrier gates (44) are located and are the only crossings which open on a daily basis, the approval rate for permit applications increased from 46 per cent in 2015 to 58 per cent in 2016 to total 6,707 approvals. The number of applications also increased by 43 per cent from 8,024 to 11,498. However, over 4,700 applications by farmers for this olive harvest were rejected.

In Ramallah governorate where all 18 gates are seasonal, farmers complained of the lack of mid-day opening and of access at weekends when they could dedicate more time to harvesting the olives.⁴ Most landowners reported that olive trees and land behind the Barrier were in very poor condition due to the lack of year-round access. The approval rate stood at 79 per cent, nearly the same as in 2015 and up from 67 per cent in 2014.⁵

In Jerusalem governorate, a total of 1,353 people applied for coordination to access their land behind the Barrier, up from 1,298 in 2015 and 887 in 2014. For the four gates that require permits, 129 people applied, of whom 75 received approval (58 per cent) and 54 were denied, primarily for security reasons.

In Bethlehem governorate, one of the three gates, Wad Dahshish/ Wadi Al Shami, did not open this olive harvest because farmers refused to provide ownership documents as a requirement to access their land behind the Barrier. In Hebron governorate, all seven gates require permits and were opened for three weeks from 26 October to 17 November. The vast majority of permit applications were approved.⁶ However, a significant number of farmers owning land behind the Barrier who had been denied permits in the past refrained from re-applying this year.

Of the 84 agricultural gates along the Barrier, 63 require access permits and 21 prior coordination.

Impact of access restrictions on olive productivity

Access restrictions to land behind the Barrier and in the vicinity of settlements impede essential year-round agricultural activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilizing, and pest and weed management. As a result, there is an adverse impact on olive productivity and value. Data collected by OCHA over the last three years in the northern West Bank show that the yield of olive trees in the area between the Barrier and the Green Line has reduced by approximately 65 per cent in comparison with equivalent trees in areas which can be accessed all year round.⁷





Khader Radad

About 35 per cent of agricultural land in Az Zawiya village (Salfit) trapped between the Barrier and Elkana Israeli settlement

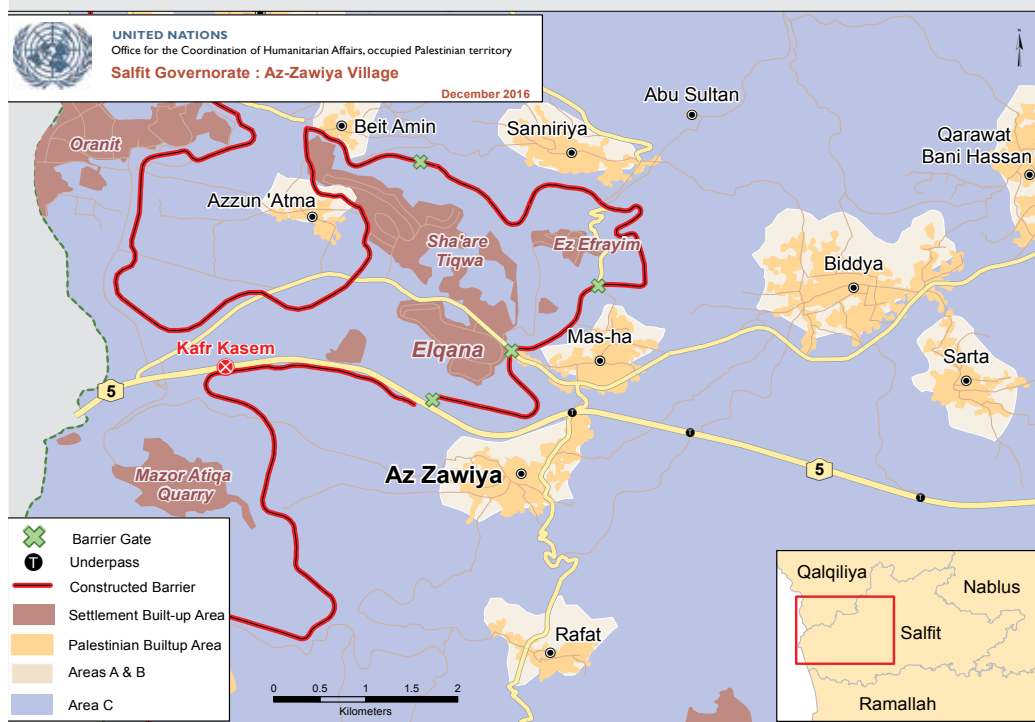
About 35 per cent (8,000 dunums) of the agricultural land of Az Zawiya (population 5,768), all planted with olive trees, is located in the seam zone behind the Barrier and within Elkana settlement boundaries.

To access land in this area, Palestinian farmers must obtain a permit to cross the Barrier through the agricultural gate controlled by the Israeli army. They also need prior coordination to cross the fences surrounding the settlement.

Khader Raddad and his family own six dunums of land (20 olive trees) behind the Barrier, and 15 dunums (250 olive trees) on the Palestinian side of the Barrier. In September 2013, at least 320 olive trees belonging to Az-Zawiya were completely burned in the seam zone. “The land is not ploughed and the grass is dry... throw a match and boom! All the trees are burnt,” said Khader.

OCHA has monitored the productivity of Khader’s olive trees for the past four years (see chart) by testing 10 trees on each side of the Barrier. This year, the 10 trees on the Palestinian side produced 150 kg of olives, while the ones on other side of the Barrier produced only 50 kg. Prior to the completion of the Barrier in 2004, Khader’s family was self-sufficient, but they now have to buy olive oil from the market to meet their needs

“The land is not ploughed and the grass is dry... throw a match and boom! All the trees are burnt.”



Significant increase in agricultural exports/transfers from Gaza during 2016

*This article is
contributed by FAO.*

The main export/transfer⁸ season for Gaza's agricultural produce began in December. The volume of produce leaving Gaza has risen since late 2014, following the easing of Israeli restrictions on the exit of goods to markets in the West Bank and Israel. Revenues in 2016 (up to 8 December) totaled \$11.9 million, an increase of almost 80 per cent compared with 2015 (\$6.7 million) and more than five times higher than 2014 revenues (\$2.2 million). Despite this improvement, 2016 revenues are about half of those recorded in 2007 when the blockade was imposed.

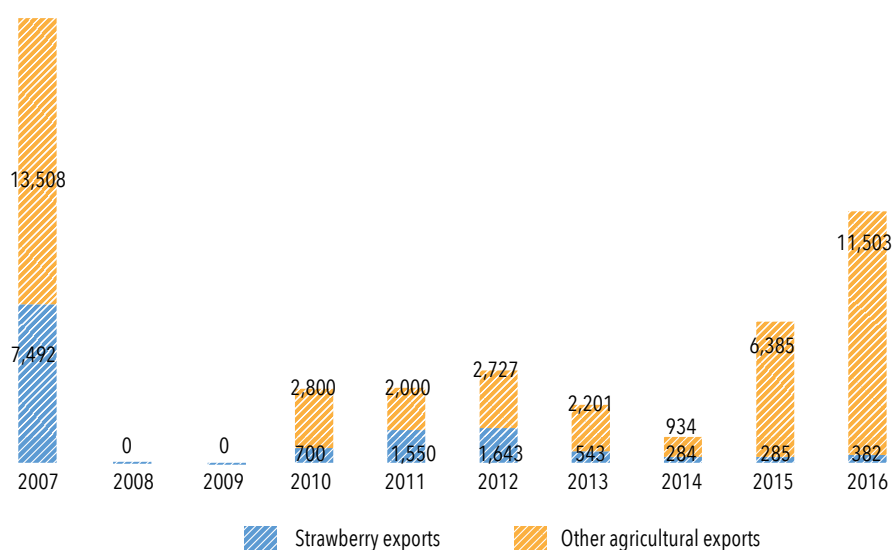
The strawberry sector struggling to recover

Strawberries are one of the highest value crops and accounted for over one-third of export/transfer revenues prior to the blockade in 2007. The severe restrictions imposed over the past decade have created strong disincentives for farmers to grow strawberries as the produce could end up saturating the local market, where farmers obtain less than 30 per cent of the value received from external markets, if they manage to sell their produce at all.

Restrictions on strawberry transfers were eased in the middle of the 2015 season when the first truck was allowed to exit for the West Bank. No quotas are currently in place for sales of Gazan strawberries to the West Bank, EU or Russia, while export to Israel remains banned. Assuming no additional restrictions, an estimated 400 tonnes of strawberries worth more than \$1 million could be exported, doubling the revenue obtained during the 2015-6 season.⁹

*2016 export
revenues in Gaza
were five times
higher than those of
2014.*

Agricultural exports/transfers from the Gaza Strip (in thousands US\$)



Despite significant growth in the volume of produce marketed outside Gaza in the past two years, current restrictions continue to prevent a more significant recovery in the agricultural sector, particularly strawberries. Restrictions include: limited quotas on the quantity and variety of exports allowed to reach Israeli markets;¹⁰ severe restrictions on imports of some agricultural inputs classified by Israel as 'dual-use' items, such as fertilizers at certain concentrations, wood panels and steel pipes of specific diameters;¹¹ delays in the exit of fresh agricultural produce due to prolonged inspections at the Kerem Shalom crossing; limitations on the height of cargo trucks allowed through this crossing of 1.6 metres rather than the 1.9 metre international standard; and restricted access by farmers to areas within 300 metres of the perimeter fence with Israel.

Despite a significant decrease in total GDP during between 2005-2008, agricultural GDP increased during this period

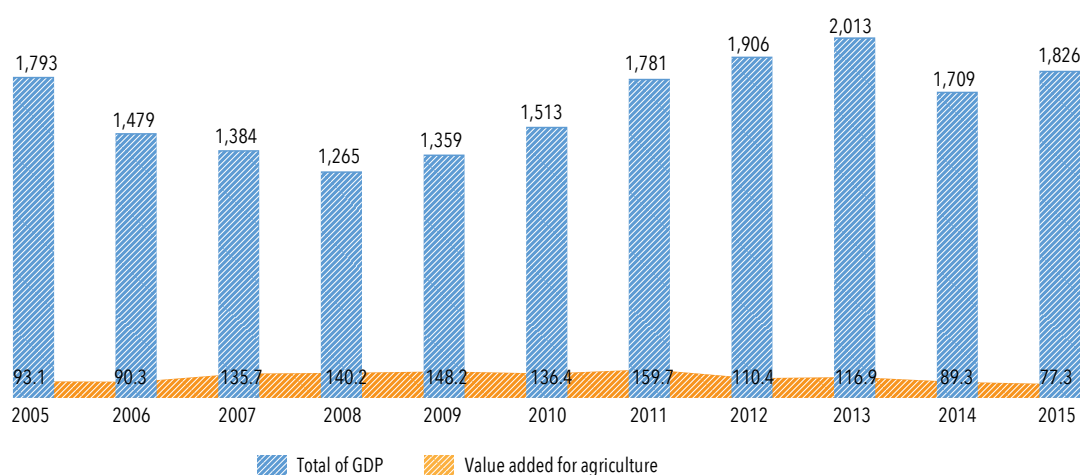
Agriculture as a coping mechanism

As the blockade enters its tenth year, the socio-economic gap between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank shows no signs of narrowing. By the third-quarter of 2016 the unemployment rate across the Gaza Strip stood at 43.2 per cent compared to 19.6 in the West Bank.¹² In Gaza, 47 per cent of households were estimated to be moderately or severely food insecure.¹³

Despite a significant decrease in total GDP between 2005-2008, agricultural GDP increased during this period. The acceleration in agricultural value added is linked to a shift in the labour force towards agriculture as other employment opportunities dwindled. However, as total GDP rose from 2011 to 2013, agricultural value added declined.¹⁴ This indicates that agricultural work acts as a coping mechanism in Gaza when the economy falters.

The drop in agricultural value added from 2013 to 2014 reflects a significant reduction in the cropping area due primarily to the damage inflicted during the July-August 2014 hostilities (from 201,000 dunums to 187,000 dunums).¹⁵ Despite extensive efforts,¹⁶ nearly half of the agricultural land damaged during the conflict has not yet been rehabilitated.

Contribution of Agriculture to GDP in the Gaza Strip (in thousands US\$)



\$547 million funding appeal to address humanitarian needs in Palestine during 2017

On 19 December 2016, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities, Robert Piper, and the Minister of Social Development of the State of Palestine, Dr Ibrahim Al-Shaer, launched the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt.

The plan seeks \$547 million in donor funding to support the humanitarian needs of some 1.7 million Palestinians whose livelihoods and rights have been severely undermined by almost 50 years of Israeli military occupation, compounded by recurrent cycles of violence. It consists of 243 projects to be implemented by 95 organizations, including 47 national and 35 international NGOs, and 13 UN agencies. The funds requested are around four per cent lower than the appeal for the 2016 HRP.

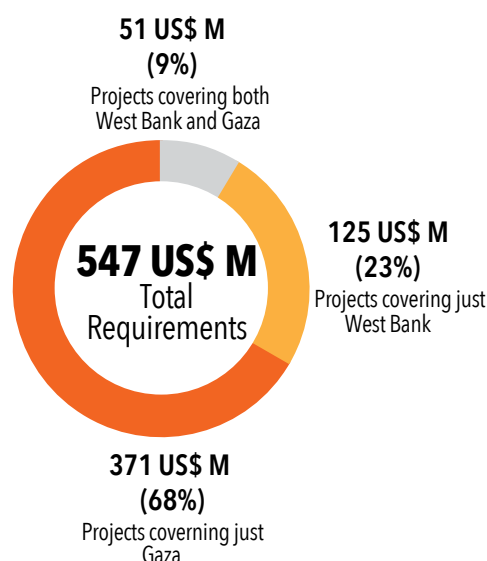
More than half of the requested \$547 million address food insecurity.

The interventions included in the HRP aim to achieve three strategic objectives. Firstly, to protect the rights of Palestinians under occupation in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. This is a cross-cutting objective that permeates all activities presented in the HRP. Secondly, to ensure access to basic services, including education, primary healthcare and clean water, for the most vulnerable such as the elderly, widows, children and female-headed households. Thirdly, to strengthen the resilience of the population to shocks and threats, and their ability to cope with ongoing pressures. Through the provision of food assistance, cash-for-work programs, and other livelihood support interventions, the HRP aims to counter negative coping mechanisms by families to meet their basic needs e.g. removing their children from school because they cannot afford fees or the early marriage of daughters.





SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS BY LOCATION



“International support is critical to continue providing relief to vulnerable Palestinians, but ... this humanitarian response must be coupled with bold political action to bring the world’s most protracted protection crisis to a close.”
Robert Piper.

Nearly 55 per cent of the funds requested (\$300 million) target 1.65 million Palestinians who are moderately to severely food insecure in that they do not consume adequate nutritious and varied food according to international standards. This is primarily due to high unemployment - especially among women and youth - and the erosion of livelihoods as a result of the occupation. Another 19 per cent of the funds requested (\$104) are to address shelter needs of people in the Gaza Strip displaced during the 2014 conflict, and those living in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank displaced due to house demolitions on the grounds of the lack of Israeli-issued building permits. The remaining 26 per cent of the funds requested are allocated to a range of projects in protection, water and sanitation, education and health.

Of the funds requested, 68 per cent are for projects in the Gaza Strip where humanitarian needs are the highest due to the Israeli blockade, recurrent hostilities and the impact of internal Palestinian divisions. A further 23 per cent of the funds are for projects in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 9 per cent are for projects covering all the oPt.

Robert Piper stated: “International support is critical to continue providing relief to vulnerable Palestinians, but we are just trying to buy time – this humanitarian response must be coupled with bold political action to bring the world’s most protracted protection crisis to a close.”

This HRP is part of the 2017 Global Humanitarian Overview launched by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O’Brien, on 5 December in Geneva, Switzerland. The overview includes response plans and appeals to deliver urgent relief, protection and support to nearly 93 million of the most vulnerable in 33 countries. This will require \$22.2 billion in funding – the largest consolidated humanitarian appeal ever launched.



2017 FUNDING REQUIREMENTS BY CLUSTER

Cluster	Requirements	Number of partners	Number of projects
Health & Nutrition	\$13m	13	17
Coordination & Support Services	\$19m	9	9
Education	\$20m	18	27
WASH	\$37m	17	33
Protection	\$54m	36	65
Shelter and NFIs	\$104m	15	31
Food Security	\$300m	37	61
			243

The humanitarian impact of de facto settlement expansion: the case of Talmon-Nahliel bloc

New research to enhance the humanitarian response and preparedness

The establishment and continuous expansion of settlements, in contravention of international law, is a key driver of humanitarian vulnerability.¹⁷ It has resulted in Palestinians being deprived of their property and sources of livelihood, restricted access to services and has given rise to a range of protection threats that trigger demand for assistance from the humanitarian community.¹⁸

Research and the monitoring of settlement expansion has focused on the construction of residential areas and has neglected other means of expansion such as road networks and the development of agricultural and tourist sites, mostly on privately-owned Palestinian land, without formal permits, but with the acquiescence of the Israeli authorities (hereafter: de facto expansion). Additionally, while issues such as settler violence and access restrictions to protect settlements are regularly monitored, their relationship to the phenomenon of settlement expansion is often overlooked.

To enhance the humanitarian community's understanding of these patterns and its ability to respond, OCHA has collected and analysed data on several areas affected in the West Bank.¹⁹ The following case study of Nahliel and Talmon settlements in Ramallah governorate is the second in a series of Humanitarian Bulletin articles on the findings of this research.

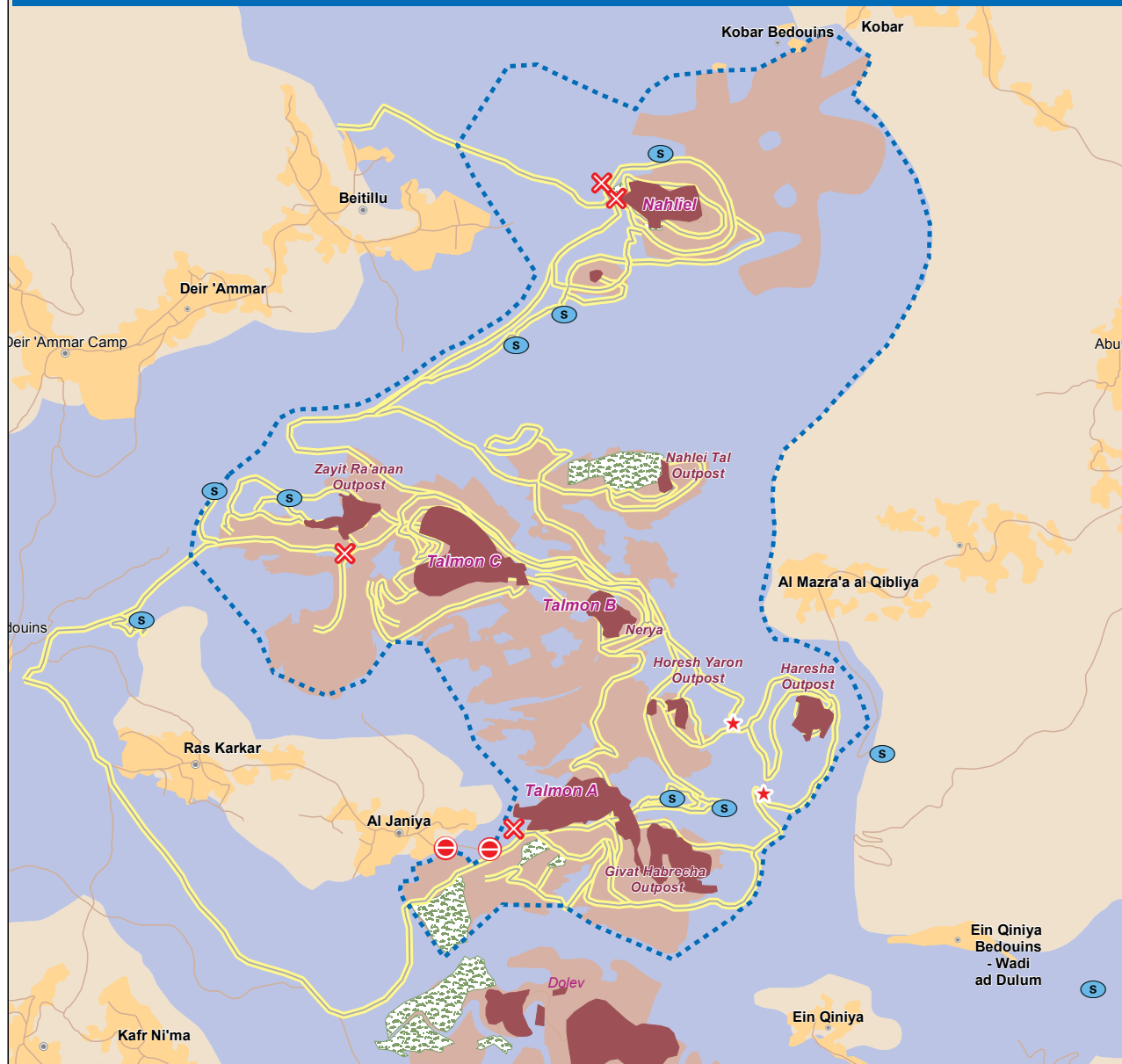
More than 50 per cent of the land in the de facto controlled area of Talmon-Nahliel bloc is privately owned by Palestinians.



Talmon-Nahliel settlement bloc, Dec 2016.

Talmon-Nahliel settlements: official and de facto boundaries

December 2016



- Settlement built-up area
- Settlement municipal boundary
- Settlement de facto boundaries
- Area cultivated by settlers
- Settlement road

- ✕ Settlement gate
- ⊖ Road Block
- S Spring taken-over
- ★ Lookout point
- Palestinian Built-up Area
- Area A, B
- Area C



0 0.25 0.5 Km

Nahliel and Talmon settlements were established in 1984 and 1989 respectively and have a population of about 4,400. While the official Israeli-designated municipal boundaries of these settlements cover some 6,200 dunums (combined), OCHA's research found that the area controlled by the settlements and in which Palestinian access is severely restricted or impossible, is almost 2.5 times larger (15,100 dunums).²⁰ According to Israeli official records,²¹ more than half of the land within these de facto boundaries is privately owned by Palestinians from six nearby villages: Beitillu, Ras Karkar, Al Janya, Deir Ammar, Mazra'a Al Qibliya and Kobar, where approximately 20,000 people live.²²

Expanding a permanent settler presence

Between 1997 and 2002, six new residential settlements, labeled new neighborhoods or outposts, were established on the hilltops surrounding Talmon. All but one (Nerya) were established without a building permit or formal authorization.²³ Despite this, in recent years the Israeli authorities have initiated multiple planning processes to retroactively make these settlements legal under Israeli law. So far, this process has been completed for one of the outposts (Giv'at Habrecha). In the case of the Haresha outpost, the "legalization" process required that 800 dunums of land claimed by Palestinians as their private property be declared as "state land".²⁴ In Nahlei Tal outpost, the construction of dozens of permanent housing units is underway even though the relevant planning scheme is yet to be approved and no building permits have been issued.

Attempts to establish an additional outpost next to Nahliel settlement were blocked by the Israeli authorities, who dismantled a few temporary structures there. According to Israeli official data, since 2000 the Israeli Civil Administration has issued a total of 293 demolition orders against unauthorized construction in the Talmon-Nahliel controlled area, of which 40 (14 per cent) were executed.²⁵

Eight water springs are located within the affected area. These were used in the past by Palestinian farmers and herders for irrigation and the watering of livestock, but have now become largely inaccessible. Five of these springs have been taken over by settlers and developed as tourist sites with the support of government bodies.²⁶ Similarly, a

Since 2000, Israel Civil Administration issued 293 demolition orders against unauthorized construction in the Talmon-Nahliel bloc, of which 14 per cent were executed.



hilltop next to Haresha outpost, which until the late 1990s was a popular destination for Palestinian pilgrimage (“Sheikh Issa grave”) was also taken over and developed as a tourist lookout point (“Wineries Hill”).

Since 2008, settlers have occupied and begun cultivating, mainly as vineyards, nearly 140 dunums of land, mostly privately owned by Palestinians according to Israeli official records. Additionally, a group of settlers from Nahliel also own a few hundred sheep and goats, which they regularly graze in the valleys between the two settlements.

This de facto expansion has been accompanied and facilitated by the development of an extensive road network connecting the different residential, tourist and agricultural sites. The network extends over almost 60 kilometres and is largely banned for Palestinian use. It includes main roads paved by the Israeli authorities on private Palestinian land requisitioned for “military needs”,²⁷ as well as dirt roads opened by settlers without official authorization.

Impeding and discouraging Palestinian access

In a series of group discussions conducted by OCHA, residents reported that the regular presence of armed settlers across the affected area, primarily the security coordinators of the settlements and their guards, is intimidating and has discouraged them from accessing their land.²⁸ The area is also regularly patrolled by Israeli soldiers posted on a military base established next to Talmon in 2005.

The intimidating effect of Israeli armed presence is consolidated by systematic attacks by settlers against farmers and their property. Since 2006, OCHA has documented 14 incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties (one fatality and 23 injuries) and 74 incidents resulting in damage to property, 60 per cent of which entailed uprooting, setting on fire and vandalizing more than 2,200 olive trees. The remaining incidents include theft,

“We used to make 150 gallons of olive oil but now we make only 20 gallons.” Abed al Huda Shreiteh, whose olive grove is adjacent to the outpost of Harasha.



Abdel al Huda Shreiteh outside his house which was burned by settlers in 2011 (Dec 2016)

I own 260 dunums of land near the Ein Harasha water spring. One plot of 60 dunums is planted with lemons and oranges and another plot of 200 dunums with olive trees. Since 1986 we have faced difficulties accessing the olive grove, which is adjacent to the settlement outpost of Harasha. We used to make 150 gallons of olive oil but now we make only 20 gallons. In addition, we face settler harassment almost daily. In 2011 a group of Israeli settlers set fire to a house we own on our farm and physically assaulted my son. We have submitted many complaints to the Israeli police and provided them with footage from a video camera provided by the B'Tselem human rights organization, but have not been informed of any outcome.

Abdel al Huda Shreiteh, Mazra'a Al Qibliya.³⁰

damage and arson of agricultural property, and stoning of vehicles and houses. Almost 70 per cent of these incidents (61 incidents) occurred between 2010 and 2013, with a decline recorded in the next three years (19 incidents). These figures exclude the more frequent incidents of harassment, access prevention, and the expulsion of farmers and herders from their land.

Since 2006, there have been at least 11 incidents involving Palestinian attacks against settlers, nine of which involved stone-throwing at vehicles and resulted in seven injuries and damage to vehicles and other property. On 19 June 2015, an Israeli civilian was shot dead by Palestinians while visiting a water spring on Palestinian land adjacent to the Talmon-Nahliel controlled area.

In recent years, Palestinian access to the area controlled by the settlement has been allowed twice a year (during the harvest and ploughing seasons), for two to four days on each occasion and subject to prior coordination with the Israeli authorities. This arrangement applies to six separate areas identified by the Israeli authorities, encompassing some 700 dunums or five per cent of the settlement-controlled area.²⁹ According to some farmers, this access, albeit very limited, is more predictable than access to privately owned land within the affected area, which is not subject to any formal restriction but involves the threat of systematic intimidation and violence.

Irrespective of the prior coordination, the ability of Palestinian farmers to reach their land is also impeded by physical obstacles deployed by the army or settlers which force them to take long detours. For example, Palestinian access to the main road connecting the two settlements is blocked by a road gate installed in 2003, next to Nahliel main entrance. This gate has remained largely closed despite a commitment by the authorities to open it following a petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice.

Shrinking space, reduced livelihoods

Based on statistics about the scope of land cultivation outside of built up areas in the Ramallah governorate, it is estimated that there are nearly 11,000 dunums of cultivable land within the area controlled by Talmon-Nahliel. Assuming free access were possible, the cultivation of this area along the same models observed in the rest of the governorate (in terms of irrigation and variety of crops), and assuming the same rates of return, would generate an output of approximately \$2.3 million a year.³¹ This is a conservative estimate based on existing very limited irrigation and excluding other significant income-generating activities such as herding. However, given the severe constraints on Palestinian access to this area, only a tiny portion of this economic potential is being realized.

The six Palestinian communities affected by Talmon-Nahliel de facto expansion face a fragile socio-economic situation:

- The average unemployment rate is approximately 20 per cent, according to estimates by each of the village councils;
- There are 108 families (approx. 550 people) classified as hardship cases and entitled to cash assistance from the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development (MoSD);³²
- 140 households (approx. 700 individuals) not covered by the MoSD are dependent on food assistance (food rations or vouchers) provided by the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The restoration of permanent access and security for Palestinians to their land in the settlement-controlled areas would generate much needed livelihood and employment opportunities, and would alleviate the hardship of families affected by unemployment and food insecurity. The return of land to its Palestinian owners and its cultivation would also generate an economic “spillover effect”, with the additional income spent on local goods and services to multiply the impact of the initial growth.

*Between 2000-2006
Al Janiyya farmers
had no access to their
land near Talmon
settlement.*

Al Janiya village - coordination difficulties

Abbas Yousef (75), from Al Janiya village, owns 20 dunums of land located inside the fence of Talmon settlement. The land consists of two plots planted with 65 olive trees. According to him, the difficulties in gaining access to this land started in the early 1980s, immediately after the establishment of the settlement.

Until the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, there was an informal understanding between Al Janiyya farmers and the Israeli authorities to allow Palestinians to access their land near the settlement for a few days a year. This arrangement was suspended completely between 2000 and 2006, during which time most of the trees in this area were reportedly vandalized or uprooted, including 15 of Yousef’s trees. Since 2011, farmers from Al Janiya have been allocated three to four days during the olive harvest season and one to two days during the ploughing season to access their land, following prior coordination with the Israeli authorities. The latter prevent some farmers from using tractors to plough their land, citing potential damage to the settlement’s sewage network.

In addition to the loss of 15 yielding trees, Yousef reports that the 50 olive trees that currently remain in this area yield an average of 10 gallons of olive oil per season, generating an income of approximately US\$1,000, down from 30 gallons generating US\$3,000 prior to 2000.



Abbas Yousif standing on access restricted road leading to Talmon, Dec 2016.

Endnotes

1. PALTRADE, The State of Palestine National Export Strategy: Olive Oil, Sector Export Strategy 2014-2018, pp. 5-9. In a typical year, approximately 75 per cent of olive oil is absorbed by the domestic market, 14 percent is exported to Arab markets and eight per cent is exported to Israel.
2. Five cases are still being investigated; two cases involved incidents documented by a different organization and Yesh Din has not been informed of their status. Yesh Din, Disruptions to the Olive Harvest in the West Bank, November 2016. According to Yesh Din, over 96 per cent of complaints filed with the Israeli police between 2005 and 2014 regarding deliberate damage to Palestinian-owned trees by Israeli settlers, and followed up by the organization, were closed without an indictment. <http://www.yesh-din.org/infoitem.asp?infocaid=633>
3. This figure excludes the seven checkpoints not used to access agricultural land, but used by residents of the "Seam Zone" to reach workplaces and essential services in the rest of the West Bank.
4. Gates opened between 13 and 25 October (nine days, excluding Fridays and Saturdays), twice a day, 07:30 and 17:00
5. According to the Palestinian District Civil Liaison Office (DCL) and village councils, there were 1.047 applications in total in 2016.
6. 520 out of 521 in the case of Idna and Khirbet Adair, and 284 out of 295 in the case of Deir Samet, Beit Awa and Deir Al Asal.
7. For further details on the methodology used for data collection see: February Humanitarian Bulletin 2014, p 12. Link: http://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_03_19_english.pdf
8. Transfers refer to products leaving Gaza to the West Bank.
9. Calculated using the farm gate price of 10 shekels per kilogramme.
10. Currently, the Israeli government allows 250 tonnes of tomatoes and 50 tonnes of eggplant to enter Israel from the Gaza Strip.
11. Wood panels are used to repair gutters on greenhouses and steel pipes are used in the construction of greenhouses and animal shelters.
12. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2016.
13. Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey (SEFSec), 2015.
14. This shift also coincided with the opening of tunnels along the Egyptian border, which was associated with a decline in the number of agricultural workers as labourers moved to working in the tunnels.
15. Cropping area is the total cultivated area (dunum/year); it differs from the cultivated area because land is usually planted more than one time during the year (seasonal cultivation).
16. By the third quarter of 2016, 70% of greenhouses, 9% of tree orchards, 55% of water wells, 56% of vegetable fields, and 95% of sheep and cattle farms had been reconstructed or rehabilitated.
17. Since 1967, about 250 Israeli settlements and settlement outposts have been established across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This violates Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer by the occupying power of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. This has been confirmed numerous times, among others by the International Court of Justice (Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of 9 July 2004); the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention (Declaration from 5 December 2001); the United Nations Security Council (Resolution 471); and the United Nations General Assembly (Resolutions 3092 (XXVIII), 47/172 and 66/225).
18. For an overview of the humanitarian responses to settlement activities proposed by humanitarian agencies operating in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2016, see Humanitarian Country Team, Strategic Response Plan 2016, available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2016-humanitarian-response-plan-occupied-palestinian-territory>.
19. Cases were selected to represent different geographical areas of the West Bank, and the extent to which settlement activities in each of the selected cases has received attention from humanitarian actors.
20. This finding is based on a series of focus group discussions with residents of affected neighbouring Palestinian communities, supplemented with dozens of visits and analysis of aerial pictures of the area since the late 1980s that reveal trends in cultivation, the development of built-up areas, appearance of new roads, etc.

21. Calculation based on a GIS layer obtained from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) marking the status of the land in the affected area as either privately-owned or public (also known as “state”) land.
22. Due to the unavailability of PCBS data for 2014, the population of three of the affected communities (Beitillu, Deir Ammar and Mazra’a Al Qibliya) was estimated based on 2007 data and updated by the rate of growth for Ramallah governorate as a whole.
23. The settlement established with official authorization was called Nerya. The other five are: Horesh Yaron, Zait Ra’anan, Haresha, Nahlei Tal and Givat Habrecha. The latter outpost was “legalized” retroactively under Israeli law in 2011 after a petition filed by residents of Al Janyia to the Israeli High Court of Justice was rejected.
24. A petition against this declaration was filed by the Palestinian owners with the Israeli High Court of Justice and is still pending.
25. GIS layer provided by the ICA to the Israeli NGO, Bimkom, following an information request under the Freedom of Information Act. Demolition orders executed include structures removed by their owners.
26. The Mate Binyamin Regional Council, to which both settlements belong, has a dedicated webpage (in Hebrew) promoting tourism in the area, including the five springs. See: <http://www.gobinyamin.org.il/?CategoryID=704>
27. This is the case with the main road linking Nahliel and Talmon. This is one of the bypass roads planned in the IDF redeployment as part of the Oslo Interim Agreement and the handover of areas to the Palestinian Authority. Seizure order 28/95 issued on 17 September 1995. Another major route opened in 2002 and connects three of Talmon’s outposts to the main bypass road leading westwards into Israel (Road 463).
28. Military orders define five separate ‘guarding areas’ covering nearly 2,800 dunums where security coordinators are authorized to operate. In practice, the area of operation of these armed settlers is defined by the de facto boundaries. The IDF is formally responsible for arming, training and supervising the work of security coordinators who are accountable to the municipal bodies of the settlement that appoint them and pay their salaries, often creating a conflict of interests. For further background on the issue, see Yesh Din, The Lawless Zone, June 2014.
29. According to official maps issued by the Israeli Civil Administration in 2014.
30. Testimonies collected in January 2014.
31. Agricultural economic potential was estimated by FAO on the basis of data provided by OCHA on the size of the areas affected and by PCBS (2007/8) on cultivation patterns in Nablus governorate.
32. Allocations range from NIS 750-1,800 every three months depending on the severity of the case.