



Urgent: Israeli Settlers Forcefully Evict Palestinians from their Lands in Al-Makhrour, the Last Green Area left in Bethlehem and a UNESCO World Heritage Site

On July 31st, 2024, a group of illegal Israeli settlers, accompanied by the Israeli Civil Administration, attacked and forcefully evicted the Kissieh family, a Palestinian Christian family from Beit Jala, from their land at Al-Makhrour Valley, located to the northeast of Beit Jala. The owner of the land called the Israeli police to help him confront this attack. However, when the police arrived, they arrested his son, and forced the family to vacate their land, while allowing the Israeli settlers to remain in the land, without any “legal” claims, or eviction notices issued prior to this attack.

Such attacks must be perceived with great alarm and immediate action, as they target Bethlehem’s last green and open space area, and a part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, attempting to finally implement the long-term Israeli plans to annex it.

Israel’s long term strategy of illegal land grabs has been now accelerated by the Israeli police and civil administration, and executed by illegal Israeli settlers. Such deliberate attempts, aimed at displacing Palestinians and robbing their lands and properties, are blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law.

Such escalated aggressions are not occurring in a vacuum. They are fueled by the extremist rhetoric of Right-Wing Minister Smotrich, who has been openly endorsing and inciting such acts. In absence of effective accountability, and especially under the guise of October 7th, the Israeli government exploits the Gaza situation to intensify land theft and settlement expansion in the West Bank, as recently reported by the BIHR, including assigning the jurisdictional area of a new settlement near Al-Makhrour¹. This happens while the Israeli government is also expanding the settlement that was planted in the heart of the Valley since 2019, at the ruins of the demolished property of the Kissieh family, the same family that was forcefully evicted by the settlers yesterday. Such policies, including land grab and forcible displacement, while grave violations impacting all Palestinians in the West Bank, have aggravated impacts in Al Makhrour, as

¹ An Update by Balasan Initiative for Human Rights: “New Israeli Settlement Poses Imminent Threats on Bethlehem’s Last Remaining Green Areas”. (July 2024).
<https://balasan.org/new-israeli-settlement-poses-imminent-threats-on-bethlehems-last-remaining-green-areas/>

displacing Palestinian Christian families from their lands contributes directly to the largely declining numbers of Palestinian Christians, especially as a result of such policies².

² Read: “The Balasan Initiative Submits an Urgent Appeal to UN Special Procedures on the Imminent Threats on the Palestinian Christian Presence on Both Sides of the Green Line due to Israel’s Ongoing Breaches of International Humanitarian & Human Rights Law”:

<https://balasan.org/the-balasan-initiative-submits-an-urgent-appeal-to-un-special-procedures/>