



Yesh Din

Volunteers for Human Rights

The inauguration of the 37th government of Israel on December 29, 2022, marked the beginning of an escalation both in the number of violent incidents by settlers in the West Bank and in their severity

On February 26, 2023, following the killing of two settlers, approximately [400 settlers invaded the village of Huwwara](#), impacting the entire Nablus region, with hundreds of Palestinians injured and one killed, at least 100 vehicles incinerated, and dozens of houses vandalized and burned. Israeli security forces were present at the scene yet did not prevent the violence, but rather secured the settlers during the attacks.

In March, the Israeli Government voted to [cancel significant clauses of the 2005 Disengagement Law](#), giving Israelis legal authority to enter the lands that were evacuated in the four former settlements in the northern West Bank during the 2005 Disengagement. This constituted a key component in the re-establishment of the evacuated settlement Homesh.

In May, procedures for retroactively legalizing at least 70 illegal outposts in the West Bank began, [based on the decision of the State Security Cabinet from February](#). The government intends to legalize most of these outposts within 2-3 years. On May 25, within hours of witnessing dozens of [settlers escorted by soldiers igniting homes](#) in the village of Burqa, residents reported the [commencement of substantial infrastructure](#) development aiming to [solidify the presence](#) of the nearby illegal Homesh outpost. In addition, the [Taxation on NGO Bill](#) that would impose a 65% tax on civil society organizations funded by “foreign governmental entities” was scheduled for a vote, that with the help of international pressure, was postponed indefinitely.

In June, after four Israelis were killed by a Palestinian near the settlement of Eli, several villages suffered [attacks by hundreds of Israeli settlers](#), resulting in many injuries, catastrophic property damage, and the establishment of at least eight new outposts. The attacks were characterized by large groups of settlers, often armed with live ammunition, invading Palestinian villages, throwing stones, and setting fire to vehicles, agricultural lands, and homes ([some with people inside](#)). Israeli soldiers, who were present during most of the attacks, did not even attempt to stop the Israeli attackers and intervened only to join the attacks against Palestinians.

In August, the Israeli High Court Justices [issued a ruling deleting the petition](#) to evacuate Homesh and restore access of rightful landowners to their lands. However, [the legal struggle with the residents of Burqa against the Homesh outpost continued](#), and Yesh Din filed a [High Court petition](#) on behalf of the Head of the Burqa Village Council demanding that the newly defined jurisdiction of the Samaria Regional Council, intended for the re-establishment of the

Homesh settlement, be canceled. The petition further calls for the public ('state') lands to be allocated for the benefit of Burqa residents, rather than to a new settlement.

Yesh Din was, and still is, horrified by the criminal and cruel attack carried out by Hamas on the citizens of Israel on October 7. Since then, in the two and a half months since the war broke out, settlers have perpetrated intense violence against Palestinians in the West Bank daily. Between October 7 and November 20, Yesh Din alone [documented 225 incidents](#) of Israeli violence against Palestinians in 93 West Bank towns and villages, yet the Israeli law enforcement authorities in the West Bank have not filed a single indictment against the violent settlers. This marks a peak of settler violence unprecedented in both scope and severity; settler attacks in the West Bank have taken the lives of nine Palestinians. In some incidents, [settlers were armed, some wearing military or paramilitary gear](#), assuming de facto authority on the ground, and acting as soldiers. In addition, settlers have exploited the lack of public attention to the West Bank, to escalate violent attacks in an attempt to forcibly transfer Palestinian communities. [15 communities have been forcibly transferred](#) due to the violence.

Palestinians seeking to harvest their olives faced severe [violence](#) and [theft](#), forcing many to abandon their crops, and inflicting serious damage to their livelihoods. This year, due to the war, the military prevented landowners from harvesting their olives if they happen to grow on plots that are near settlements. In many cases, the military prevented Palestinian landowners from harvesting their olives even in remote areas far from settlements. These incidents indicate that Israel's failure to enforce its laws is an intentional policy of the state - [allegedly instructed by Minister on National Security Itamar Ben Gvir](#) -

which normalizes ideologically motivated crime against Palestinians in the West Bank, supports it, and benefits from its outcomes.

On December 5, the U.S. State Department [announced a new visa restriction](#) policy aimed at Israeli citizens believed to have committed acts of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. Several European countries [have since announced](#) that they support the implementation of a policy preventing entry from Israeli citizens who have engaged in settler violence in the West Bank. Among the countries that have issued public statements supportive of this policy are [The US](#), [Belgium](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Ireland](#), [Spain](#), [Malta](#), [Slovenia](#), and the [UK](#). In addition, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen supports such sanctions, as [she stated](#) on December 13. We urge the European Union member states to seriously consider these statements which urge the international community to act responsibly in the face of Israel's culture of impunity towards ideologically-motivated criminals carrying out violence against Palestinians.

What's Next?

In these very challenging times, which saw some of the most extreme and rampant settler violence Yesh Din has ever documented, Yesh Din continues to fight for justice for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, to challenge this extreme government's annexation policies, including fighting against Israel's plans to re-establish a settlement in Homesh. Ahead of the New Year, Yesh Din's staff and volunteers thank you for your support during this contentious period. Your interest in our findings and concern for the escalating situation are vital to Yesh Din's work and the continuously shrinking space for human rights organizations in Israel. In the new year and beyond,

Yesh Din will continue to urge the international community to demand accountability from the Government of Israel for its systemic violation of the rights of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our partners and colleagues in the international community. We send our wishes for justice, peace, and liberty to all.



Yesh Din lawyers and field researchers on a visit to the plot of a Palestinian land owner who is being denied access to his land - October 4, 2023.

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Yesh Din is proud to be funded by States that are committed to the rule of law, that believe the occupation is not an internal Israeli matter, and that support the defense of international humanitarian law and human rights.



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