

# Fencing of areas used for grazing by the Palestinian shepherds in the Jordan Beqaa Valley

November 2020

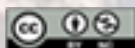




# Fencing of areas used for grazing by the Palestinian shepherds in the Jordan Beqaa Valley

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## Fencing of areas used for grazing by the Palestinian population in the Jordan Beqaa Valley

### General

This preliminary document refers to a large-scale fencing work in the northern Jordan Beqaa Valley that began in early 2020 and continues today.

**Placing a fence along many kilometers has wide environmental implications, in addition to the restriction on the grazing areas of Palestinian shepherds and their flocks, whose traditional grazing is their sole source of livelihood.**

The information gathered so far with the assistance of Israeli volunteers who accompany the Palestinian shepherds in their daily routine throughout the year:

1. The length of the fence that has been completed so far is about 15 km.  
A fence begins at the settlement of Maskiyot in the direction of Umm Zuka and from Umm Zuka stretches south in the direction of settlement of Hemdat.  
The fence passes through 'fire areas' and nearby nature reserves<sup>1</sup> and actually cuts the area into two, a western and eastern part. In fact, according to volunteers testimonies, fences cut the pastures of nearby Palestinian communities to the point where they may no longer exist.
2. Apart from the restriction of grazing to Palestinian shepherds, the fence poses enormous environmental damage to the fauna of the area and reduces the living space of the animals in the area.
3. Financing and resources - It is not yet clear who is financing the construction of fences, but the fencing work carried out in the field is in a large area that requires significant financial resources and probably institutional assistance.

### The stages of the Fencing works

First fence: The fence work started at the beginning of 2020 from the military base in Umm Zuka to the North.

The second fence: stretched in the last Spring from Maskiot settlement to the south of Umm Zuka.

The third fence: stretched these days from the military base Umm Zuka south towards Hemdat settlement.

Please find pictures, page 5.

### Palestinian communities affected by the construction of the fence

- Ein El Hillwe (5 families)
- Umm Gamal (2 families)
- Tent Compound of Yaser and Tent Compound of Abed Abu Milhem

<sup>1</sup> This issue is being examined whether the new fence crosses the area of the nature reserve, or passes very close to the border of the reserve. It is difficult to find up-to-date maps that follow the frequent changes in this area.



- Samra (3 families)
- Halat Makchoul (3 families)
- Ell Hadidiya - The southernmost community west of Hemdat. (13 families)

### Testimonies by Palestinians Shepherds<sup>2</sup>

The change in the living conditions of Palestinian shepherds since the establishment of the new outposts in the northern Jordan Valley (starting in 2016).

#### Reduction of grazing areas and soil depletion

1. Until 2016 (before the establishment of the first 2 outposts), the shepherds used to walk with their flocks east to Route 90. After the establishment of the outposts, their grazing area was cut by about 70%. (The military began enforcing the ban on entry into fire areas and nature reserves only after the outposts were established within the fire areas and nature reserves.) And now, following the massive fencing from early 2020, they have between 5% and 10% of the original grazing land left. As a result of reducing their grazing areas so dramatically, the areas left over are dwindling due to over grazing.

2. As a result of the reduction in grazing land, shepherds are forced to buy much more barley to feed the herds. Today they buy double what they used to buy before.

#### Water problems

3. The shepherds are assisted by a system of cisterns for storing rainwater. These pits need regular maintenance (cleaning mud and stones). Since the outposts came up, the army no longer allows shepherds to clear the pits under various pretexts. And on top of that, in the last four years, the military has destroyed or blocked about 80% of the cisterns in the area.

4. Because the communities do not receive a connection to the existing water system (intended only for settlements) and are prohibited from laying pipes from nearby Palestinian towns, the communities are forced to buy and bring their water from distant places and store it in water trailers. As a result, they pay 4 or 5 times what farmers pay in the surrounding settlements. Due to high water prices, some communities are moving during the summer months with their herds to places where water is available and cheaper.

5. Until the establishment of the settlers' outposts, it was never a problem for these communities to leave the encampments and dwellings in place. Since the outposts were established, these encampments have been looted every summer and objects and sometimes entire dwellings (metal constructions) have been stolen from them, and the sheep have remained outdoors without protection.

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<sup>2</sup> The testimonies were gathered by an Israeli activist who accompany the Palestinian Shepherds in Jordan Beqaa Valley, November 2020







## Ways of action – Call to the International Community

Our appeal to the International community is to act on the issue.

The Association for Environmental Justice in Israel, with the assistance of Israeli volunteers for the Palestinian shepherds in the Jordan Beqaa Valley, are working to gather complete information on the subject.

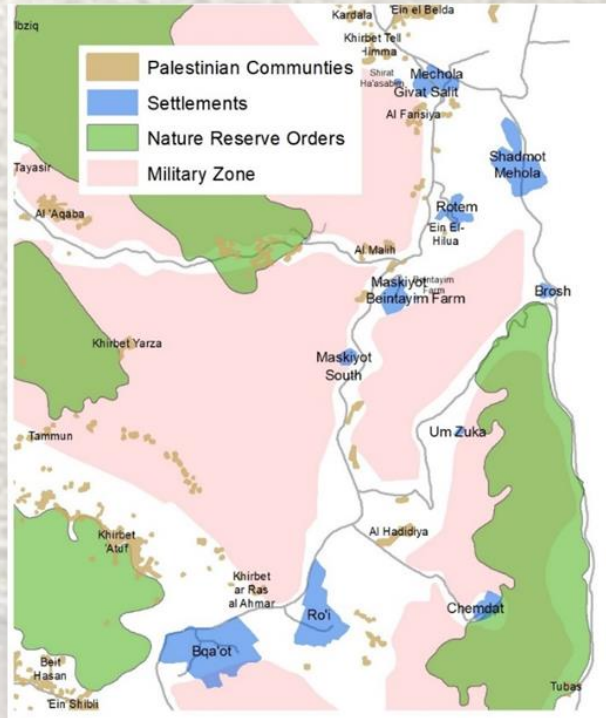
At the same time, should be considered the complicated legal situation of the area, both in Israel and in the context of international law, according to which grazing areas are the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture but due to the status of the Jordan Beqaa Valley, the Civic Administration at the Ministry of Defense is the address, a move that makes it difficult to apply and handle within a reasonable time frame, while fencing work continues in the field.

The **timing** should be emphasized - the winter grazing season is about to begin, which is the only season in which animal nutrition is based on natural grazing, a move that is of great importance both economically and ecologically.

In addition, due to the dominance of the factors identified with the settlers and their ability to establish facts on the ground, while harming the natural ecosystem environment, and pose economic risks to the Palestinian pastures in the area - **An assistance from the international community is required to stop the construction of fences and restore the grazing areas to grazing the Palestinian herds while ensuring their economic existence and safe livelihood in the area.**



**Geographical documentation:**



*The areas in Northern Jordan Beqaa Valley – the settlements of Maskiyot and Hemdat.  
 Map: Peace Now*



*The Fence route to Hemdat settlement<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Govmap Link: <https://www.govmap.gov.il/?c=249077.98,688162.36&z=6&b=2>





*Umm Zuka nature reserve<sup>4</sup>*



*Fence works in Northern Jordan Beqaa Valley*

<sup>4</sup> Govmap Link: [https://www.govmap.gov.il/?c=250373.21,691853.46&z=4&lay=RES\\_PARKS\\_MEFORAT,FIRE\\_AREAS](https://www.govmap.gov.il/?c=250373.21,691853.46&z=4&lay=RES_PARKS_MEFORAT,FIRE_AREAS)



*Photos: by Israeli activists*







The Association of Environmental Justice in Israel (AEJI)  
المنظمة للمعدل البيئي العنصرية للعدالة البيئية (ع"ר)

The Association of Environmental Justice in Israel (AEJI) thanks the Israeli volunteers, field activists, who accompany Palestinian shepherds throughout the year, for the update and effort to bring the information to the attention of the public in Israel and around the world.

**For Further Information Please contact us:**  
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