

FEBRUARY 2025

# URGENT ACTION NEEDED

## LARGEST PALESTINIAN HERDER COMMUNITY IN AREA C UNDER THREAT OF DISPLACEMENT

**On February 10th, 2025**, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued a notice of intent to allot state lands for herding purposes around the Ras Ein al Auja community (Jericho district). It is likely the land will be allotted to the very same settlers working to forcibly displace the Ras Ein al Auja community. The blocks at stake (marked in red on the map) include the community's immediate grazing grounds and some of their residential area. The official allotment will legally enable settlers to take over the grazing land immediately adjacent to Ras Ein al Auja, giving them grounds to literally sit at the doorstep of the residents they harass and even enter Palestinian homes situated within the area allotted to them. Ras Ein al Auja's situation is already precarious due to settler violence and if the allotment is approved, the risk of forcible displacement will dramatically increase. Forcible displacement of Area C's largest herding community will be catastrophic for the hundreds of its residents, as well as the local economy, and will likely send shock waves across the entire area.[1]

### Escalating Efforts to Displace the Ras Ein al Auja Community

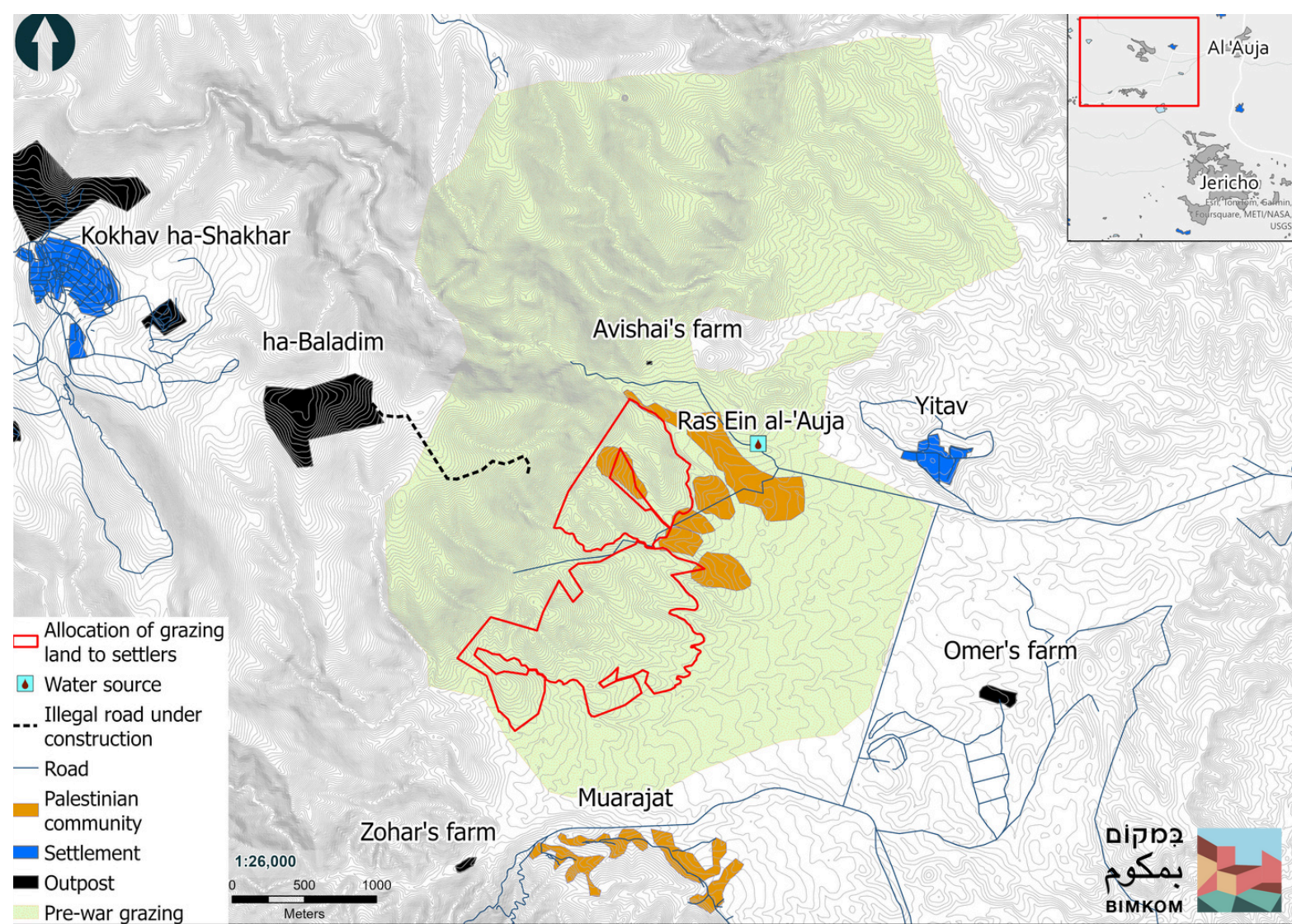
Ras Ein Al Auja is located about 7 km north-west of Jericho. As the largest herder community in the West Bank, it comprises about 150 families, who have lived in the area since the late 1970s. Despite various limitations Israel imposes, the community has managed to maintain herding as their main source of livelihood owing to their seasonal mobility practices.

Like many herding communities in Area C, Ras Ein al Auja has been targeted by settler violence since the early 2000s. Settlers established at least five farming outposts in the area, most recently only 300 meters from the community. They attempt to displace the community by restricting their movement and seizing more and more of their grazing areas. Due to this harassment, Ras Ein al Auja residents are only able to herd sheep near their residential area. Without access to pasture, herding becomes increasingly unsustainable; many families are forced to sell their herds and seek alternative livelihoods.

**Since October 7, 2023**, settler assaults on Ras Ein al Auja have significantly escalated in frequency and aggression, physically threatening the residents, and severely harming the community's livelihood and access to goods and services. Settlers enter Ras Ein al Auja's residential area, herd sheep and camels through it, steal livestock, fly drones over them, destroy fields, and damage private property. Furthermore, settlers permanently occupy the spring area, the area's main natural water source, preventing residents and their herds from accessing the spring water while damaging the water infrastructure and driving Palestinians away.

**Loss of livelihoods:** Dreading settler raids, Ras Ein al Auja residents refrain from letting the sheep out of their pens and now entirely rely on expensive fodder. These conditions lead to a sharp decline in the sheep's dairy production while incurring rising costs. Furthermore, settler control

[1] For details on other expelled communities visit: [https://www.btselem.org/settler\\_violence/20231019\\_forcible\\_transfer\\_of\\_isolated\\_communities\\_and\\_families\\_in\\_area\\_c\\_under\\_the\\_cover\\_of\\_gaza\\_fighting](https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence/20231019_forcible_transfer_of_isolated_communities_and_families_in_area_c_under_the_cover_of_gaza_fighting)



of the road to Ras Ein al Auja makes it extremely difficult to sell produce to outside customers. Thus, many are forced to relinquish sheep raising altogether.

**Personal insecurity:** Residents of Ras Ein al Auja have been living under constant threat to their physical wellbeing and the community's safety is completely disrupted. Out of fear, women and children minimize leaving their homes. Families do not leave their property unattended, because in the summer of 2024 settlers set fire to three unattended homes. Outside visitors stopped coming because the road became too dangerous. High school students are often prevented from reaching school because settlers block the road with herds.

Neither the military nor the police are acting to protect the residents of Ras Ein al Auja, and in many cases assist settlers actively or passively.

**It is essential to pressure Israel to protect the safety and livelihood of Ras Ein al Auja residents, in accordance with its obligations under international law:**

- **Advocate with the military's Central Command to issue an entry ban order, preventing settlers from entering the community's residential area, and ensuring residents' freedom of movement and access to traditional grazing land and water sources.**
- **Advocate with the ICA's Commissioner of Government Property and Abandoned Lands against allocation of the community's grazing land to settlers. A demand for allocation of state lands to Ras Ein al Auja could also be made. Advocacy efforts should be made by March 10, 2025 (deadline for objection submission).**