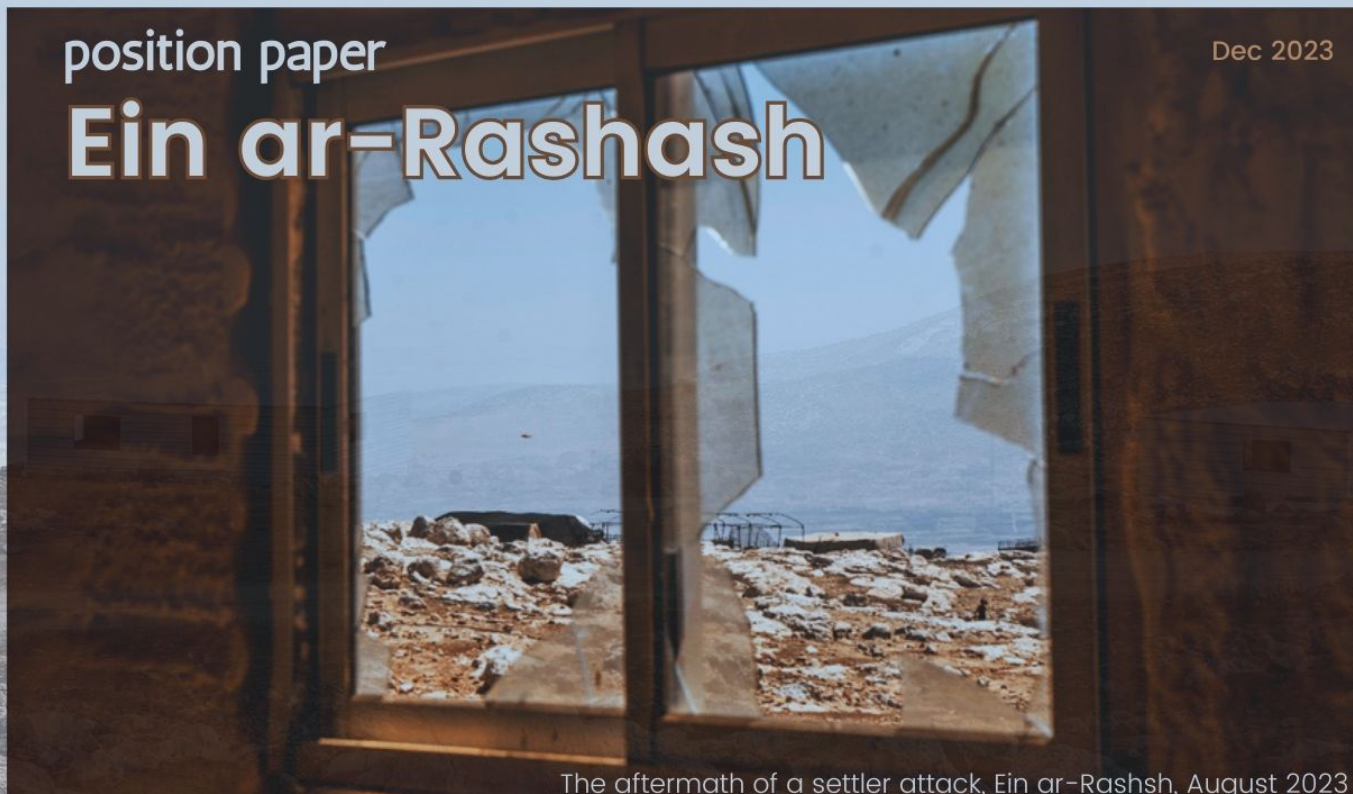


position paper

Dec 2023

Ein ar-Rashash



The aftermath of a settler attack, Ein ar-Rashash, August 2023

photo by courtesy of ActiveStills

Ein ar-Rashash is located in the Ramallah governorate, south of Duma. For almost three decades it was the home of a herder community of 18 families, today totaling 85 individuals, 25 of whom are children. The residents are landless refugees who lease the land from its al-Mughayir owners.

The community of Ein ar-Rashash was one the last remaining Palestinian herding communities in the area, after four herding communities had been forcibly transferred from the region during the past year. For years, the community was under threat of forcible transfer, due to combined pressures exerted by Israeli authorities and settlers. These pressures peaked during the onslaught against herder communities throughout the West Bank, that followed outbreak of the Gaza war. After days of repeated attacks and threats, the community moved to a neighboring village in fear of their lives.

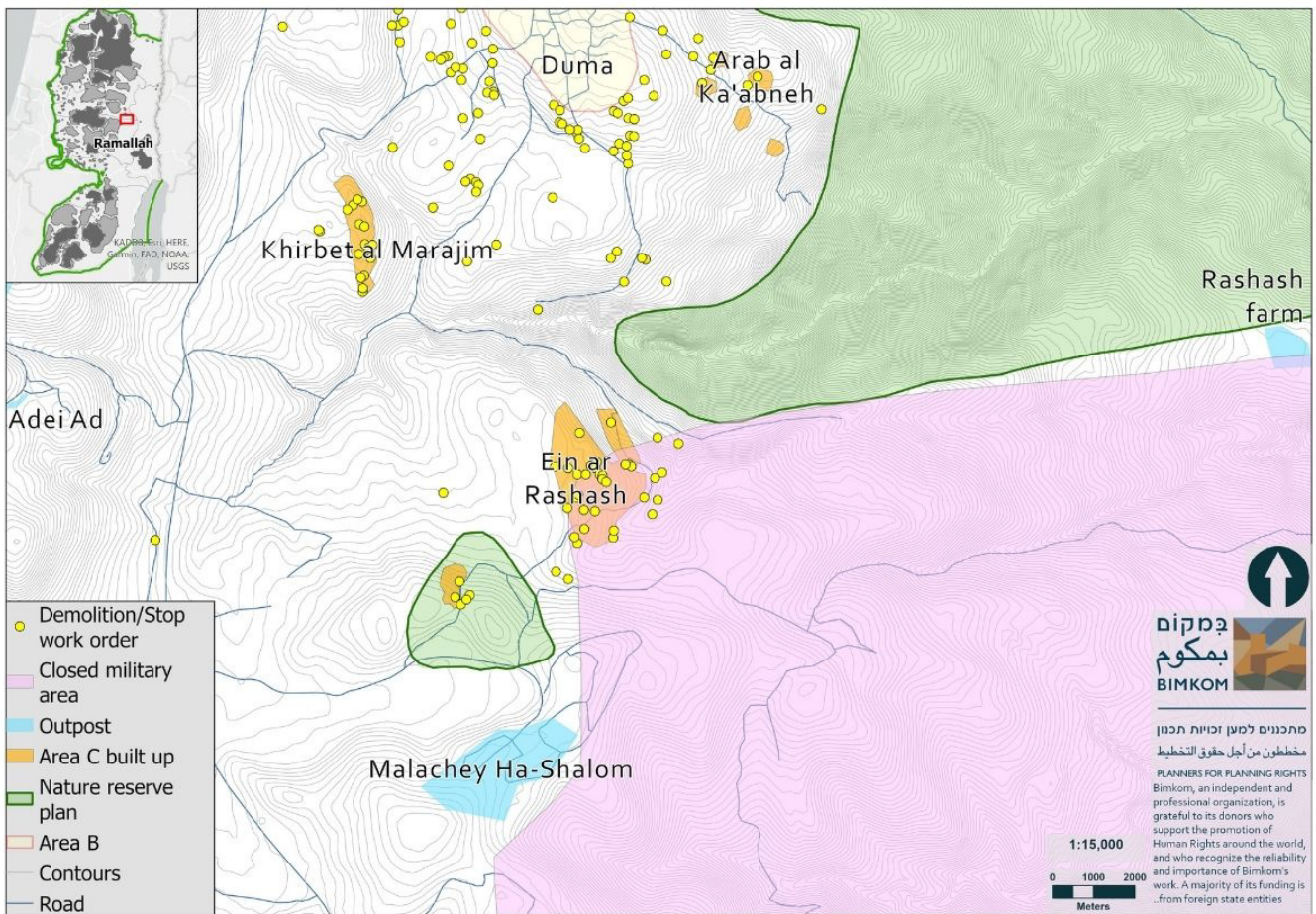
On October 9, 2023, settlers blocked the main access road to Ein ar-Rashash and prevented a water truck from entering. This forced the residents to move their entire flock of 1,500 sheep to Duma. On October 13, the women and children of the community left to Duma and three days later the remaining members of the community joined them.

History

The families who resided in Ein ar-Rashash are from the Jahalin tribe, who are refugees from the Naqab. In 1948 they were expelled from Tel Arad and resettled in Khan al Ahmar in the Jerusalem Governorate, and from there they moved to Ein ar-Rashash in the 1990s. Only a few years later, Israeli authorities planned to relocate these communities, together with other Bedouin communities to Nuweima, but the plan was frozen in 2014 due to strong objection from the communities.

Institutional violence

For years, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) tried to coerce the community into leaving by denying them basic infrastructure, preventing development, damaging their livelihood, and creating a sense of general insecurity. All this laid the ground for their eventual forcible transfer. The ICA regards Ein ar-Rashash as an illegal Palestinian settlement, and therefore applies strict enforcement measures against it. All the structures in the area have been issued demolition/stop work orders and many demolitions have taken place over the past decade. Moreover, access to grazing land is restricted due to the declaration of large parts of the area as a military firing zone and as a nature reserve.



Harassment and threats to personal safety

The Israeli authorities have discovered in the last few years that the fastest and easiest way to displace Palestinian herder communities is to let settlers do the dirty work. At times they lend them support and protection and at others simply allow them to act with impunity. While the abovementioned institutional violence played an important role in the community's forcible displacement, the main attacks against the community have been of settlers from the Malachei Hashalom outpost and the adjacent Rashash farm.[1] They have systematically used violence, harassment, and intimidation to uproot the Ein ar-Rashash community and take over their lands.

[1] Earlier this year the Israeli government announced its plans to officially formalize the outpost.

During the past year, settlers have been terrorizing the community on a daily basis. Usually armed with guns and clubs, they attack residents, invade the residential areas, burn tents, intimidate residents, and steal property and livestock. Aside from making the residents fear for their lives, the settlers also sought to ruin their livelihood. They would prevent access to pasturage and water sources and destroy crops, forcing community members to rely on fodder and purchased water. Many residents of Ein ar-Rashash had no choice but to sell their sheep and become laborers in settlements.



photo by courtesy of Alon Cohen Lifshitz



photo by courtesy of Alon Cohen Lifshitz

Displacement

The community members managed to dismantle and take with them some structures and equipment, but some had to be left behind. They are currently living on agricultural lands that they leased outside of Duma, but even there they are at risk of forcible displacement, as the land is located in area C: In the past three years, the ICA has demolished 46 structures in the parts of Duma that are in area C. As many Palestinian herder communities throughout the oPt are being forcibly transferred, the international community must pressure Israel to fulfil its legal responsibility to protect the occupied population and create conditions that will enable the

safe return of these communities to their land. The so-called "illegal" status of these herder communities' villages has been a constant source of instability and insecurity for their residents, providing fertile ground for violent settlers who wish to uproot them. As a first step towards the immediate return of these communities, the ICA must grant an exemption from permits for their rebuilding and initiate official long-term planning with and for the community. Furthermore, Israeli authorities must remove outposts that threaten the community and firmly react to any acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli civilians or security forces.



photo by courtesy of Alon Cohen Lifshitz

Preparing for displacement from Ein ar-Rashash,



photo by courtesy of ActiveStills

Israeli settlers are seen invading the community of Ein ar-Rashash with their herd and harassing its residents, West Bank, August 2023.