

IWPS Incident Report – Tragic Accident

9 November 2011

The village of Deir Istiya today mourns the loss of Abdul Muttaleb Muhammad Hakim, a 45-year-old father of 5 who was killed in a traffic collision. He was on the way home from his sister's olive grove, accompanied by his brother-in-law, who escaped the accident unharmed.

The crash happened at around 5.20 pm on Wednesday 9 November on route 5066 in close proximity of the entrance to the settlement of Revava. It appears that Hakim was crossing the road when he was hit at full speed, pulling behind him the family's donkey, which was also killed in the crash. According to Israeli soldiers who attended the scene, the driver of the car, a female settler, sustained injuries and was reportedly taken to hospital for treatment.

With the sole objective of servicing the transportation needs of Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank, route 5066 is part of the road network connecting those settlements with each other as well as providing convenient commuter links to the other side of the Green Line. These roads cut through Palestinian land paying no consideration to the needs of the rural Palestinian population in those areas. Badly lit and with no walkways or designated crossings, the road on which Hakim was killed has been the scene of a number of accidents over the past few years, involving pedestrians, who are invariably Palestinian, as well as livestock.

Residents of the villages of Deir Istiya, Haris and Kifl Haris have long complained about the lack of safety measures to protect people forced to walk along these roads which encircle their villages, and which are often the only available access route for farmers to reach their land, sandwiched between 'settler only' colonies at the top of the hills and busy roads at the bottom. In many cases, individual farmers' properties have literally been cut in half, meaning that during harvest times entire families have to keep crossing these dangerous roads.

This was a tragic accident waiting to happen, and it is symptomatic of the reality of the Occupation. Destroying thousands of acres of Palestinian farm land in the process, Israel's illegal settlement construction is developing an infrastructure that clashes violently with its environment, and incidents like these are just one of many terrible consequences.