

Update: Izbeit at-Tabib

May 2011

The entrance to the once beautiful hilltop village nestled among the pine groves is testament to a community in grave danger of being torn apart by house demolitions; proud concrete pillars welcome the visitor alongside defiant banners, which sit adjacent to uninhabited houses and the debris of bricks and household rubbish contemptuously thrown by settlers.

The village houses date from the 1920's but many houses and homes built after 1967 are illegal under Israeli law; families are not able to accommodate their expanding relations. Thirty four out of 45 houses are due to be demolished, three quarters of the entire village in which everybody is related. The mayor arrives back from work in Qalqiliya, he seems tired and says he is sleeping very badly lately, not surprising when you hear the hammering on your doors and the cries of your children at 5 in the morning.

The pine groves are stunning, the air is fresh and the walks through the village are a reminder that the Israelis might one day take this land; meantime the families continue with their lives, it is the only life they know and the village will survive.

Though the international presence was heavily afflicted by the Israeli Occupation Forces, for the time being the work of separating villagers from the land they have by building an apartheid wall, which will in itself destroy part of their land, has been halted for the time being. However, the village was raided in the early morning hours of Monday and two homes were ransacked and the international tent was destroyed.

At approximately 5:30am family members and IWPS along with other internationals were awoken by a call from internationals taking their shift at the tent which had a 24 hour presence. We were told that the military was at the tent and to come quickly. When we opened the door there were 16 soldiers around the doorway. They made everyone get out of the house and detained us in the courtyard. There were 9 children present, the youngest being 18 months. While they detained all of us and ransacked the home, destroying property such as computers and foodstuffs, ransacking all the childrens' bedrooms, they also destroyed the international tent.

However, the IOF has not silenced the village. Internationals are remaining and the village remains steadfast in their resistance to the apartheid wall. On Monday night residents and internationals joined a children's candlelight vigil in support of Izbet at Tabib's right to resist on their land. It was a beautiful sight... the children with their candles and signs.

However, it caught the attention of the ever watchful IOF; they came and gave the children 5 more minutes to "play their game" and after that the crowd had to disperse!

Israeli Police has just stated that the bulldozing of a solidarity tent in the village of Izbat At Tabib on a piece of land under threat will commence immediately, and that the building of a wall will follow.

Police produced demolition orders for the tent set up just one day ago by villagers and international solidarity activists to protest the building of a wall that is planned to begin today. The wall will cut off around 1000 square meters of agricultural land belonging to Izbat At Tabib.

Bulldozers and digging machines have entered the village accompanied by Israeli army at 1 pm.

The village council has recently petitioned the decision to build the wall, but according to Israeli police officials the High Court rejected the petition just now. According to the mayor of Izbat At Tabib, Israeli checkpoints have been set up nearby, putting Qalqilya under curfew to put pressure on the Palestinian Authority to take action against the protesters, which they have refused. Solidarity activists from Norway, France, Sweden, and Britain are present in the village to show their support for the Palestinians' right to their land. Prime Minister Salaam Fayad visited Izbat At Tabib just one week ago on Land Day, where he encouraged the villagers to keep struggling for their land.

The village of Izbat Al Tabib near Qalqilya is situated right next to highway 55, and under the pretext of preventing stones being thrown onto the highway, the Israeli Civil Administration plans to build two walls, between which will be a buffer zone of Palestinian land. This will separate Izbat Al Tabib from the highway annexing vital agricultural land.

The village, which contains 45 houses and is home to 247 inhabitants, was built in the 1920's and is located in area C. The village is not recognized by Israel and 32 out of 45 houses, and a school, have been served with demolition orders. Due to its location, Izbat Al Tabib is extremely isolated: it is the fifth poorest village in the West Bank and villagers have already lost 45% of their land to the illegal annexation wall.

A large presence of International activists joined Palestinians of the Qalqilya governorate in an attempt to prevent the destruction of farmland and homes. The Israeli Occupation Forces are attempting to build a separation barrier between the village of Izbat at Tabib and Route 55.

The international contingent included volunteers from ISM, Michigan Peace Team, IWPS, and EAPPI. A tent was erected yesterday and activists have spent last night to monitor the situation and stand in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Early in the morning a large number of IOF forces entered the village and called a closed military zone. Midday the bulldozer began the destruction. Activists attempted to halt the work by sitting in the road on front of the bulldozer. Israeli Forces brutally assaulted them. The victims reported being kicked, hit with the butt of a rifle, knocked to the ground and slammed against a jeep. One activist was taken to the hospital with a head wound and a broken wrist. Another was bleeding from head and face. At the time IWPS witnesses spoke to him, he was handcuffed tightly so that his hands were swelling up. Activists asked several times that his restraints be loosened, but the request was refused.

After seeing to the injured and detained, activists attempted to move into the village via the main road but were stopped by the IOF. When asked why they were not allowed to enter the soldiers replied they did not know. Activists skirted the check point and arrived at the solidarity tent, but both internationals and villagers were prevented from reaching the area where the bulldozer was working. Soldiers forcibly

refused women and children entry to their land. After several hours the military left the village and villagers and activists assessed the damage caused by the bulldozer. At present, activists are seeing to the detained and injured, writing reports and will return to the village to spend another night in solidarity with the village of Izbat at Tabib.





Photo: Children's candlelight vigil.



Photo: Results of an Israeli army attack in a child's bedroom.



