

New weekly demonstration at Kafr ad Dik

30 December 2011

As the year draws to a close, there is a new start for the resistance in the village of Kafr ad Dik. On the 30th December 2011 the villagers staged their first weekly Friday demonstration against the occupation. The village is in the Salfit region, and is home to around 6,000 Palestinian villagers, who have all been hit by the impact of the Israeli occupation in one way or another. Land appropriation by settlers is a major problem – there are five illegal settlements on Kafr ad Dik land, housing around 2,000 Israeli settlers, with more ever arriving. Although they are fewer in number, the settlers have better facilities, easier access to water and more space to expand – especially as with land-grabs they are taking more and more of the village land.

The majority of the land of Kafr ad Dik has been designated Zone C, meaning that it is under full Israeli administrative control – the villagers can only build within the limits of the built up area of the town, which is swiftly becoming too small. Homes of Kafr ad Dik residents have been demolished and many olive trees were uprooted over the summer of 2011. Settlers have also attacked Palestinians in the town and surrounding areas.

The mayor of the town said that the settlers and Israeli government are doing everything they can to make the people of Kafr ad Dik suffer – with the ultimate intent of driving them from their land. In opposition to these violent and illegal tactics of the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF), the village's new weekly demonstration - the only one in the Salfit region - aims to be nonviolent and peaceful.

However, the IOF were out in large numbers – already blocking the bridge from the village, when the demonstrators arrived at around 10am. There were at least a dozen soldiers, with several army jeeps. There was also a car on the road above, from which someone was taking pictures of the demonstrators – this is a concern as images of villagers attending protests have been used as an excuse to arrest many Palestinians.

Present were many of the villagers of Kafr ad Dik and the surrounding area – for example, the mayor of nearby Deir Istiya was present. There were also a group of Israeli and international activists in attendance, including representatives of IWPS, Anarchists Against the Wall, Machsom Watch and EAPPI. From where the demonstrators were assembled on the bridge, one of the nearby settlements on Kafr ad Dik land was visible, and several settlers even jogged nonchalantly past on the road above.

Initially, speeches were made, explaining the context of the new demonstration. Then at around 11 as the mosque sounded the call to prayer, the religious demonstrators assembled in lines, facing Mecca and prayed. This peaceful display of freedom of expression was very effective and the Israeli soldiers seemed unsure of how to act at this point.

At 12, the demonstration was officially disbanded by the mayor, and everyone was encouraged to go home. However, some shabab remained behind, and stones were thrown at the IOF, despite some villagers urging them to remain non-violent. The IOF had clearly been waiting for the opportunity to use their tear gas, as several volleys immediately hit around the shabab and internationals who had remained to monitor the situation. Three IOF soldiers had moved to the hill above the road, so tear gas came from

both directions. One demonstrator passed out from tear-gas inhalation and had to be removed from the scene by private car.

As a new demonstration, the atmosphere and reaction from IOF felt slightly unpredictable, but the defiance of the villagers of Kafr ad Dik is clear and they already have plans for their upcoming demonstrations. The village welcome the presence of any activists on the ground in Palestine. Their message to the Israeli government and the nearby settlers is clear –the village will neither be forced from their land nor give up their rights.