

*INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S PEACE SERVICE*  
*Deir Istiya, occupied Palestine*  
*palhouse [at] iwps-pal.org*  
*+972-(0)9-251-4644*  
*<http://iwps.info/>*

Date: 8 May 2013

Settler demonstration leads to road closures

**Date of incidents:** 8 May 2013

**Place:** Zatarra junction, Salfit Governorate, Palestine

**Witnesses:** IWPS

*Note: IWPS withholds contact information as a courtesy to those involved. However, we will do our best to furnish you with the information you may require, upon request.*

**Description of incidents:**

At approximately 16:30 on May 8, the Israeli army closed Zatarra checkpoint in the central West Bank due to a settler demonstration in the junction. The roads from Ramallah to Nablus, Zatarra to Jericho and Yasuf to Zatarra were all closed to Palestinian cars.

At 17:00, IWPS was notified that a flying checkpoint had been established on the road to Yasuf village. Cars were still allowed to pass through to Yasuf, but were prohibited from traveling in the other direction toward the junction. One army jeep and 4 soldiers were stationed at this flying checkpoint.

When IWPS volunteers arrived to Zatarra, the demonstration was over, though a large army presence was still built up in the area. A number of illegal settlers were still in the parking lot adjacent to the road junction. Hebrew graffiti was written over the Arabic portions of road signs and a number of settler protest signs had been erected in the junction. There was traffic congestion on the road that runs parallel to Route 60 from the East, as cars attempting to bypass Zatarra to travel toward Jericho were prohibited by the Israeli military and Border Police, who also randomly searched cars that passed through the checkpoint.

IWPS was notified by a resident of Yasuf that the flying checkpoint was removed at approximately 20:45, allowing travel to and from Yasuf.

Palestinians living close to Zatarra junction have been recently subject to increased road closures, check points, and military and settler violence in the last week after a settler from the illegal Israeli settlement of Yitzhar was killed last week. Following his death, much of Road 60 north of Ramallah was closed, including Zatarra and Huwarra junctions, as well as roads passing through Yasuf and Awarta villages.

In response to the settler's death, there have been a number of demonstrations in Zatarah junction, the first of which included an attempt to establish a new settlement on the site.

Last Tuesday, in the area surrounding the illegal settlements of Yitzhar and Bracha, particularly in the villages of Burin, 'Urif, Madama, and 'Asira al-Qibliya, settlers set 57 fires on the lands and attacked local Palestinians with stones. The Israeli army assisted the settler attacks, firing tear gas at Palestinians and preventing local residents from putting out fires on their lands.

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