

## **HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT No. 476(2)**

### **Collective punishment of Kufr Qaddum by the Israeli military for political activity**

**Date of incidents:** May 2013

**Place:** Kufr Qaddum, Occupied West Bank, Palestine

**Witnesses:** Residents of Kufr Qaddum, local and international activists

Early on Monday 27 May at 1:30AM three Israeli border police jeeps entered the village of Kufr Qaddum. The border police made their presence known to the villagers by driving slowly through the town center. Additionally, the following night, Tuesday 28 May, at 02:00 AM around 60 soldiers on foot and four jeeps stormed the village. The Israeli military forcefully entered 10 homes, demanding the names and employment details of all the members in each household. The soldiers and jeeps left the village at about 04:00 AM, having collectively punished an entire community through nightly harassment but making no arrests.

Just a few days before that, residents reported that on the night of Thursday 23 May, the day before the weekly demonstration, the Israeli army entered the village and stole some 200 tyres that residents light up during the demonstrations to prevent Israeli military vehicles from entering the village. Moreover, on Saturday 18 May, one day after that week's demonstration, Israeli soldiers in jeeps came to the house of one of the organizers at night and left some burning tires in his yard.

Kufr Qaddum is a 3,000-year-old agricultural village that sits on 24,000 dunams of land. The village was occupied by the Israeli army in 1967; in 1978, the illegal settler-colony of Qedumim was established nearby on the remains of a former Jordanian army camp, occupying 4,000 dunams of land stolen from Kufr Qaddum.

The villagers are currently unable to access an additional 11,000 dunams of land due to the closure by the Israeli army of the village's main and only road leading to Nablus in 2003. The road was closed in three stages, ultimately restricting access for farmers to the 11,000 dunams of land that lie along either side to one or two times a year. Since the road closure, the people of Kufr Qaddum have been forced to rely on an animal trail to access this area; the road is narrow and, according to the locals, intended only for animals.

In 2004 and 2006, three villagers died when they were unable to reach the hospital in time. The ambulances carrying them were prohibited from using the main road and were forced to take a 13 km detour. These deaths provoked even greater resentment in Kufr Qaddum and, on 1 July 2011, the villagers decided to unite in protest in order to re-open the road and protect the land in danger of settlement expansion along it.

Kufr Qaddum is home to 4,000 people; some 500 residents attend the weekly demonstrations. The villagers' resilience, determination and organization have been met with extreme repression. More than 120 village residents have been arrested; most spend 3-8 months in prison; collectively they have paid over NIS 100,000 to the Israeli courts. Around 2,000



residents have suffocated from tear-gas inhalation, many in their own homes. Over 100 residents have been shot directly with tear-gas canisters. On 27 April 2012, one man was shot in the head by a tear-gas canister that fractured his skull in three places; the injury cost him his ability to speak. In another incident, on 16 March 2012 an Israeli soldier released his dog into the crowded demonstration, where it attacked a young man, biting him for nearly 15 minutes whilst the army watched. When other residents tried to assist him, some were pushed away while others were pepper-sprayed directly in the face.

The events of the past week are part of a continuous campaign by the Israeli military to harass and intimidate the people of Kufr Qaddum into passively accepting the human rights violations the Israeli occupation, military and the illegal settlers inflict upon them.

-ENDS-